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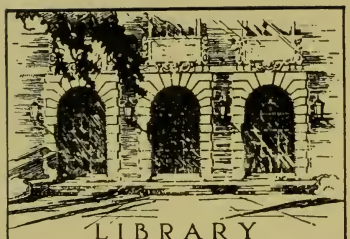

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WOODBURN GRANGE.

WOODBURN GRANGE.

A Story of English Country Life.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WOODBURN GRANGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST OF A LONG LINE.

Sir Roger Rockville, of Rockville, was the last of a very long line. It extended from the Norman Conquest to the present century. His first known ancestor came over with William, and must have been a man of some mark, either of bone and sinew, or of brain, for he obtained what the Americans would call a prime location. As his name does not occur in the roll of Battle Abbey, he was, of course, not of a high Norman extraction; but he had done enough, it seems, in the way of knocking down Saxons, to place himself on a considerable eminence

in this kingdom. The centre of his domains was conspicuous far over the country, through a high range of rock overhanging one of the sweetest rivers in the kingdom. On one hand lay a vast tract of rich marsh land, capable, as society advanced, of being converted into meadows; and on the other, as extensive moorlands, finely undulating, and abounding with woods and deer.

Here the original Sir Roger built his castle on the summit of the range of rock, with huts for his followers; and became known directly all over the country as Sir Roger de Rockville, or Sir Roger of the hamlet on the Rock. Sir Roger, no doubt, was a mighty hunter before the lord of the feudal district; it is certain that his descendants were. For generations they led a jolly life at Rockville, and were always ready to exchange the excitement of the chase for a bit of civil war. Without that the country would

have grown dull, and ale and venison lost their flavour. There was no gay London in those days, and a good brisk skirmish with their neighbours in helm and hauberk was the way of spending their season. It was their parliamentary debate, and was necessary to thin their woods. Protection and free trade were as much the great topics of interest as they are now, only they did not trouble themselves so much about corn bills. Their bills were of good steel, aud their protective measures were arrows a cloth-yard long. Protection meant a good suit of mail, and a castle with its duly prescribed moats, bastions, portcullises, and donjon keep. Free trade was a lively inroad into the neighbouring baron's lands, and the importation thence of goodly herds and flocks. Foreign cattle for home consumption was as *striking an article* in their market as ours, only the blows were expended on one another's heads, instead of the heads of foreign bullocks—

that is, bullocks from over the Welsh or Scotch marches, or from beyond the next brook.

Thus lived the Rockvilles for ages. In all the iron combats of those iron times they took care to have their quota. Whether it was Stephen against Matilda, or Richard against his father, or John against the barons; whether it were York or Lancaster, Tudor or Stuart, the Rockvilles were to be found in the *mêlée*, and winning power and lands. So long as it required only stalwart frames and stout blows, no family cut a more conspicuous figure. The Rockvilles were at Bosworth Field. The Rockvilles fought in Ireland under Elizabeth. The Rockvilles were staunch defenders of the crown in the wars of Charles I. with his parliament. The Rockvilles even fought for James II. at the Boyne, when three-fourths of the most loyal of the English nobility and gentry had deserted him in disgust and indignation.

But from that hour they had been less conspicuous.

The opposition to the successful party, that of William of Orange, of course brought them into disgrace; and though they were never molested on that account, they retired to their estate, and found it convenient to be as unobtrusive as possible. Thenceforward you heard no more of the Rockvilles in the national annals. They became only of consequence in their own district. They acted as magistrates; they served as high-sheriffs; they were a substantial county family, and nothing more. Education and civilisation advanced; a wider and very different field of action and ambition opened upon the aristocracy of England. Our fleets and armies abroad; our legislature at home; law and the church, presented brilliant paths to the ambition of those thirsting for distinction, and the good things that follow it. But somehow the Rockvilles did not expand

with this expansion. So long as it required only a figure of six feet high, broad shoulders and a strong arm, they were a great and conspicuous race; but when the head became the member most in request, they ceased to go a-head. Younger sons, it is true, served in army and navy, and filled the family pulpit, but they produced no generals, no admirals, no archbishops. The Rockvilles of Rockville were very conservative, very exclusive, and very stereotype. Other families grew poor, and enriched themselves again by marrying plebeian heiresses. New families grew up out of plebeian blood into greatness, and intermingled the vigour of their first earth with the attenuated aristocratic soil. Men of family became great lawyers, great statesmen, great prelates, and even great poets and philosophers. The Rockvilles remained high, proud, bigoted, and *bornés*.

The Rockvilles married Rockvilles, or their

first cousins the Cliffvilles, simply to prevent property going out of the family. They kept the property together; they did not lose an acre; and they were a fine, tall, solemn race, — and nothing more. What ailed them?

If you saw Sir Roger Rockville—for there was an eternal Sir Roger filling his office of high-sheriff, he had a very fine carriage, and a very fine retinue in the most approved and splendid of costumes;—if you saw him sitting on the bench at quarter-sessions, he was a tall, stately, and solemn man. If you saw Lady Rockville shopping in her handsome carriage, with very handsomely attired servants, saw her at the county ball, or on the race-stand, she was a tall, aristocratic, and stately lady. That was in the last generation—the present could boast no Lady Rockville.

Great outward respect was shown to the Rockvilles on account of the length of their

descent, and the breadth of their acres. They were always, when any stranger asked about them, declared, with a serious and important air, to be a very ancient, honourable, and substantial family. "Oh! a great family are the Rockvilles—a very great family."

But if you came to close quarters with the members of this great and highly distinguished family, you soon found yourself fundamentally astonished. You had a sensation come over you, as if you were trying, like Moses, to draw water from a rock, without his delegated power. There was a goodly outside of things before you, but nothing came of it. You talked, hoping to get talking in return; but you got little more than "noes," and "yeses," and "oh, indeeds!" and "reallys," and sometimes not even that, but a certain look of dignity, or dignification, that was meant to serve for all purposes. There was a sort of resting on aristocratic oars or "sculls," that

were not to be too vulgarly handled. There was a feeling impressed on you, that eight hundred years of descent and ten thousand a year in landed income, did not trouble themselves with the trifling things that gave distinction to lesser people—such as literature, fine arts, politics, and general knowledge. These were very well for those who had nothing else to pride themselves on, but for the Rockvilles—oh, certainly they were by no means requisite!

In fact, you found yourselves, with a little variation, in the predicament of Cowper's people—

> "who spent their lives
> In dropping buckets into empty wells,
> And *growing tired* of drawing nothing up."

Who has not often come across these dry wells of society?—solemn gulfs out of which you can pump nothing up? You know them—they are at your elbow every day in large and brilliant companies, and defy the best

sucking-buckets ever invented to extract anything from them. But the Rockvilles were each and all of this actual description. It was a family feature, and they seemed, if either, rather proud of it. They must be so; for proud they were, amazingly proud, and they had nothing else to be proud of, except their acres and their ancestors.

But the fact was, they could not help it, it was become organic. They had acted the justice of peace, and maintained the constitution against upstarts and manufacturers, signed warrants, supported the Church, and the house of correction, committed poachers, and then rested on the dignity of their ancestors for so many generations, that their sculls, brains, constitutions, and nervous systems were all so completely moulded into that shape, and baked in that mould, that a Rockville would be a Rockville to the end of time, if God and Nature would have allowed it. But such things wear out. The Ameri-

can Indians and the Australian natives wear out. They are not progressive: and as Nature abhors a vacuum, she does not forget the vacuum, wherever it may be, whether in a hot desert or in a cold and stately Rockville,—a very ancient, honourable, and substantial family that lies fallow till the thinking faculty literally dies out.

For several generations there had been symptoms of decay about the Rockville family. Not in its property; that was as large as ever. Not in their personal stature and physical aspect. The Rockvilles continued, as they always had been, a tall and not bad-looking family. But they grew gradually less prolific. For a hundred and fifty years past, there had seldom been more than two, or at most, three children. There had generally been an heir to the estate, and another to the family pulpit, and sometimes a daughter, married to some neighbouring squire. But Sir Roger's father had been an

only child, and Sir Roger himself was an only child. The danger of extinction to the family, apparent as it was, had never induced Sir Roger to marry. At the time that we are turning our attention upon him, he had reached the mature age of sixty. Nobody believed that Sir Roger now would marry; he was the last, and likely to be, of his line.

It is worth while here to take a glance at Sir Roger and his estate. They exhibited a strange contrast. The one bore all the signs of progress, the other of a stereotyped feudality. The estate, which in the days of the first Sir Roger de Rockville had been half morass and three-quarters wilderness, was now cultivated to the pitch of British agricultural science. The marsh lands beyond the river were one splendid expanse of richest meadows, yielding a rental of four solid pounds per acre. Over hill and dale on this side for miles, where formerly ran wild deer, and grew wild woodlands or furze-bushes,

now lay excellent farms and hamlets, and along the ridge of the ancient cliffs rose the most magnificent woods. Woods, too, clothed the steep hill-sides, and swept down to the noble river, their very boughs hanging far out over its clear and rapid waters. In the midst of these fine woods stood Rockville Hall, the family seat of the Rockvilles. It reared its old brick walls over the towering mass of elms, and travellers at a distance recognised it for what it was—the mansion of an ancient and wealthy family.

The progress of England in arts, science, commerce, and manufactures, had carried Sir Roger's estate along with it. It was full of active and moneyed farmers, and flourished under modern influences. How lucky it would have been for the Rockville family had it done the same!

But amid this estate, there was Sir Roger, solitary, and the last of the line. He had grown well enough — there was nothing

stunted about him, as far as you could see on the surface. In stature he exceeded six feet. His colossal elms could not boast of a more proper relative growth. He was as large a landlord and as tall a justice of the peace as you could desire; but, unfortunately, after all, he was only the shell of a man. Like many of his veteran elms, there was a very fine stem, only it was hollow. There was a man just with the rather awkward deficiency of a soul.

And it was no difficult task to explain, either, how this had come about. The Rockvilles saw plainly enough the necessity of manuring their lands, but they scorned the very idea of manuring their family. What! that most ancient, honourable, and substantial family suffer any of the common earth of humanity to gather about its roots! The Rockvilles were so careful of their good blood that they never allied it to any but blood as pure and inane as their own. Their elms

flourished in the rotten earth of plebeian accumulations, and their acres produced large crops of corn from the sewage of towns and fat sinks, but the Rockvilles themselves took especial care that no vulgar vigour from the real heap of ordinary human nature should infuse a new force of intellect into their race. The Rockvilles needed nothing : they had all that an ancient, honourable, and substantial family could need. The Rockvilles had no necessity to study at school—why should they ? They did not want to get on. The Rockvilles did not aspire to distinction for talent in the world—why should they ? They had a large estate, and a large estate implies large honour and respect, though the owners of it be simply cyphers. So the Rockville soul—unused from generation to generation—grew

"Fine by degrees and beautifully less,"

till it tapered off into nothing.

Look at the last of a long line in the midst of his fine estate. Tall he was, with a stoop

in his shoulders, and a bowing of his head on one side, as if he had been accustomed to stand under the low boughs of his woods, and peer after intruders. And that was precisely the fact. His features were thin and sharp ; his nose prominent and keen in its character ; his eyes small, black, and peering like a mole's, or a hungry swine's. Sir Roger was still oracular on the bench, after consulting his clerk, who was a good lawyer, and looked up to by the neighbouring squires in election matters, for he was an unswerving tory. You never heard of a rational thing that he had said in the whole course of his life ; but that mattered little—he was a gentleman of solemn aspect, of stately gait, and of very ancient family.

With ten thousand a year, and his rental rising, he was still, however, a man of overwhelming cares. What mattered a fine estate if all the world was against him ? And Sir Roger firmly believed that he stood in

that predicament. He had grown up to regard the world as full of little beside upstarts, radicals, manufacturers, and poachers. All were banded, in his belief, against the landed interest. It demanded all the energy of his very small faculties to defend himself and the landed aristocracy against them.

Unfortunately for his peace, a large manufacturing town had sprung up within a couple of miles of him. He could see its red-brick walls, and its red-tiled roofs, and its tall, smoke-vomiting chimneys, growing and extending over the slopes beyond the river. It was to him the most irritating sight in the world; for what were all those swarming weavers and spinners but arrant radicals, upstarts, sworn foes of the ancient institutions and the landed interests of England? Sir Roger had passed through many a desperate conflict with them for the return of members to parliament. They brought forward men that were utter wormwood to all his feelings,

and they paid no more respect to him and his friends on such occasions than they did to the meanest creature living. Reverence for ancient blood did not exist in that plebeian and rapidly multiplying tribe. There were master manufacturers there actually that looked and talked as big as himself, and, *entre nous*, talked a vast deal more cleverly. The people talked of rights and franchises, and freedom of speech and of conscience, in a way that was really frightful.

Then they were given most inveterately to running out in whole and everlasting crowds on Sundays and holidays into the fields and woods; and as there was no part of the neighbourhood half so pleasant as the groves and river-banks of Rockville, they came swarming up there in crowds that were enough to drive any man of acres frantic.

Unluckily there were roads all about Rockville; foot roads, and high roads, and bridle roads. There was a road up the river-side,

all the way to Rockville woods ; and when it reached them, it divided like a fork, and one foot-path led straight up a magnificent grove of a mile long, ending close to the hall : and another ran all along the river-side, under the hills and branches of the wood.

Oh, delicious were those woods ! In the river there were islands, which were covered in summer with the greenest grass, and the freshest of willows, and the clearest of waters rushed around them in the most inviting manner imaginable. And there were numbers of people extremely ready to accept this delectable invitation of these waters. There they came in fine weather, and as these islands were only separated from the mainland by a little and very shallow stream, it was delightful for lovers to get across, with laughter, and treading on stepping-stones, and slipping off the stepping-stones up to the ankles into the cool brook, with pretty screams and fresh laughter, and then landing

on those sunny, and to them, really enchanted islands.

And then came fishermen: solitary fishermen, and fishermen in rows; fishermen lying in the flowery grass, with fragrant meadow-sweet and honey-breathing clover all about their ears; and fishermen standing in file, as if they were determined to clear all the river of fish in a day. And there were other lovers, and troops of loiterers, and shouting roysterers, going along under the boughs of the wood, and following the turns of that most companionable of rivers. And there were boats going up and down; boats full of young people, all holiday finery and mirth, and boats with duck-hunters, and others, in Sir Roger's eyes, detestable marauders, with guns and dogs and great bottles of beer. In the fine grove, on summer-days, there might be found hundreds of people. There were pic-nic parties, fathers and mothers, with whole families of children,

and a grand promenade of the delighted artizans and their wives or sweethearts.

In the times prior to the growth, rapid yet steady, of the neighbouring town, Great Castleborough, and to the simultaneous development of the love-of-nature principle in the Castleburghians, nothing had been thought of all these roads. The roads were well enough till they led to these inroads. Then Sir Roger aroused himself. This must be changed. The roads must be stopped. Nothing was easier to his fancy. His fellow justices, Sir Benjamin Bullockshed and Squire Sheepshank, had asked his aid to stop the like nuisances, and it had been done at once. So Sir Roger put up notices all about, that the roads were to be stopped by an Order of Session, and these notices were signed, as required by law, by their worships of Bullockshed and Sheepshank. But Sir Roger soon found that it was one thing to stop a road leading from

One-man-town to Lonely Lodge, and another to attempt to stop those leading from Great Castleborough to Rockville.

On the very first Sunday after the exhibition of those notice-boards, there was a ferment in the Grove of Rockville, as if all the bees in the county were swarming there, and all the wasps and hornets to boot. Great crowds were collected before each of these obnoxious placards, and the amount of curses vomited forth against them was really shocking for any day, but more especially for a Sunday. Presently there was a rush at them; they were torn down, and simultaneously pitched into the river. There were great crowds swarming all about Rockville all that day, and the next, being St. Monday, with looks so defiant, that Sir Roger more than once contemplated sending off for the Yeomanry Cavalry to defend his house, which he seriously thought in danger.

But so far from being intimidated from

proceeding, this demonstration only made Sir Roger the more determined. To have so desperate and irreverent a population coming about his house and woods, now presented itself in a much more formidable aspect than ever. So, next day, not only were the placards once more hoisted, but rewards offered for the discovery of the offenders, attended with all the maledictions of the insulted majesty of the law. No notice was taken of this ; but the whole of Great Castleborough was in a buzz and an agitation. There were posters plastered all over the walls of the town, four times as large as Sir Roger's notices, in this style :—

"Englishmen! Your dearest rights are menaced! The woods of Rockville, your ancient, rightful, and enchanting resort, are to be closed to you. Castleburghians, the eyes of the world are upon you. 'Awake! arise! or be for ever fallen!' England expects every man to do his duty! And

your duty is to resist and defy the grasping soil-lords, to seize on your ancient patrimony!"

"Patrimony! Ancient and rightful resort of Rockville!" Sir Roger was astounded at the audacity of this upstart plebeian race. What! they actually claimed Rockville, the heritage of a hundred successive Rockvilles, as their own. Sir Roger determined to carry it to the Sessions; and at the Sessions was a magnificent muster of all his friends. There was Sir Roger himself in the chair; and on either hand a prodigious row of country squirearchy. There was Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, and Sir Thomas Tenterhook, and all the squires—Sheepshank, Ramsbottom, Turnbull, Otterbrook, and Swagsides. The clerk of the Sessions read the notice for the closing of all the foot-paths through the woods of Rockville, and declared that this notice had been duly, and for the required period, publicly posted. The Castleburghians

protested by their able lawyer, Dare Deville, against any order for the closing of these ancient woods—the inestimable property of the public.

"Property of the public!" exclaimed Sir Roger. "Property of the public!" echoed the multitudinous voices of indignant Bullocksheds, Tenterhooks, and Ramsbottoms. "Why, sir, do you dispute the right of Sir Roger Rockville to his own estate?"

"By no means," replied the undaunted Dare Deville; "the estate of Rockville is unquestionably the property of the honourable baronet, Sir Roger Rockville; but the roads through it are as unquestionably the property of the public."

The whole bench looked at itself; that is, at each other, in wrathful astonishment. The swelling in the diaphragms of the squires of Otterbrook, Turnbull, and Swagsides, and all the rest of the worshipful row, was too big for utterance. Only Sir Roger himself

burst forth with an abrupt—"Impudent fellow! But I'll see him —— first!"

"Grant the order!" said Sir Benjamin Bullockshed; and the whole bench nodded assent. The able lawyer Dare Deville retired with a pleasant smile. He saw an agreeable prospect of plenty of grist to his mill. Sir Roger was rich, and so was Great Castleborough. He rubbed his hands not in the least like a man defeated, and thought to himself—"Let them go at it—all right."

The next day the placards on the Rockville estate were changed for others, bearing, "STOPPED BY ORDER OF SESSIONS!" and alongside of them were huge carefully painted boards, denouncing on all trespassers prosecutions according to law. The same evening came a prodigious invasion of Castleburghians, who tore down all the boards and placards, and carried them on their shoulders to Great Castleborough, singing as they went, "See the Conquering Heroes come!" They set

them up in the centre of the Castleborough market-place, and burnt them along with an effigy of Roger Rockville.

This was grist at once to the mill of the able lawyer Dare Deville. He looked on and rubbed his hands. Warrants were speedily issued by the baronets of Bullockshed and Tenterhook, for the apprehension of the individuals who had been seen carrying off the notice-boards, for larceny; and against a number of others for trespass, and for aiding and abetting. There was plenty of work for Dare Deville and his brethren of the robe; but it all ended, after the flying about of sundry mandamuses and assize trials, in Sir Roger finding that though Rockville was his, the roads through it were the public's.

As Sir Roger drove homewards from the assize, which finally settled the question of those foot-paths, he heard the bells in all the steeples of Great Castleborough burst forth with a grand peal of triumph. He closed

the windows of his fine old carriage, and sunk into a corner: but he could not drown the intolerable sound. "But," said he, "I'll stop their pic-nicing. I'll stop their fishing. I'll have hold of them for trespassing and poaching!" There was war henceforth between Rockville and Great Castleborough.

On the next Sunday there came literally thousands of the jubilant Castleburghians to Rockville. They had brought baskets and wine for dining and drinking success to all foot-paths. But in the great grove there were keepers and watchers, who warned them to keep the path, that narrow, well-worn line up the middle of the grove. "What! were they not to sit on the grass?" "No." "What! were they not to pic-nic?" "No; not there!"

The Castleburghians felt a sudden damp on their spirits. But the river-bank! The cry was "to the river-bank! There they *would* pic-nic!" The crowd rushed away

down the wood; but there they found a whole regiment of watchers, who pointed again to the narrow line of foot-path, and told them not to trespass beyond it. But the islands! They went over to the islands. There, too, were Sir Roger's forces, who warned them back. There was no road there—all found there would be trespassers, and be duly punished.

The Castleburghians discovered that their triumph was not quite so complete as they had flattered themselves. The foot-paths were theirs, but that was all. Their ancient licence was at an end. If they came there, there was no more fishing; if they came in crowds, there was no more pic-nicing; if they walked through the woods in numbers, they must keep to Indian file, or they were summoned before the county magistrates for trespass and were soundly fined; and not even the able Dare Deville would undertake to defend them.

The Castleburghians were chop-fallen, but they were angry and dogged; and they thronged up to the village, and the front of the hall. They filled the little inn in the hamlet—they went by scores, and roving all over the churchyard, read epitaphs—

"That teach the rustic moralists to die,"

but don't teach them to give up their old indulgences very good-humouredly. They went and sat in a row on the old churchyard-wall, opposite to the very windows of the irate Sir Roger. They felt themselves beaten, and Sir Roger felt himself beaten. True, he could coerce them to the foot-path—but, then, they had the foot-paths: yet, on the other hand, the pic-nicing, and the fishing, and the islands! The Castleburghians were full of sullen wrath, and Sir Roger was—oh, most expressive old Saxon phrase—HAIRSORE! Yes, he was one universal wound of vexation and jealousy of his rights.

Every hair in his body was like a pin sticking in him. Come within a dozen yards of him ; nay, at the most, blow on him, and he was excruciated—you rubbed his sensitive hairs at a furlong's distance.

The next Sunday the people found the churchyard locked up, except during service, when beadles walked there, and desired them not to loiter and disturb the congregation, closing the gates and showing them out like a flock of sheep the moment the service was over. This was fuel to the already boiling blood of Castleborough. The week following, what was their astonishment to find the much frequented, the charming little rustic inn gone. It was actually gone ! not a trace of it ; but the spot where it had stood for ages, turfed, planted with young spruce trees, and fenced off with post and rail. The exasperated people now launched forth an immensity of fulminations against the churl, Sir Roger ; and a certain number

of them resolved to come and seat themselves in the street of the hamlet and there dine; but a terrific thunderstorm, which seemed in league with Sir Roger, soon routed them, drenched them through, and on attempting to seek shelter in the cottages, the poor people said they were very sorry, but it was as much as their holdings were worth, and they dare not admit them.

Sir Roger had triumphed! It was all over with the old delightful days at Rockville. There was an end of pic-nicing, of fishing, of roving in the islands. One sturdy disciple of Izaak Walton, indeed, dared to fling a line from the banks of Rockville Grove, but Sir Roger himself came upon him, and endeavoured to seize him. The man coolly walked into the middle of the river, and without a word continued his fishing.

"Get out there!" exclaimed Sir Roger, "that is still on my property." The man waded through the river to the other bank,

where he knew that the land was rented by a farmer. "Give over!" shouted Sir Roger. "I tell you the water is mine!"

"Then," said the fellow, "bottle it up, and be-hanged to you! Don't you see it is all running away to Castleborough?"

The story was carried by the man to the town, and occasioned a good laugh, and many a time when Sir Roger appeared in the place, he was greeted with—"Why don't you bottle up the Trent?" But the joke did not compensate for a tittle of what was lost: there was bad blood between Rockville and Castleborough as a settled condition. Castleborough was incensed, and Sir Roger was hairsore.

A new nuisance sprang up. The people of Castleborough looked on the cottagers of Rockville as sunk in the deepest darkness under Sir Roger, and his cousin the vicar, who had seconded, and it was believed had instigated the baronet to a great portion of

these proceedings. They could not pic-nic, but they thought they could hold a camp-meeting. They could not fish for roach, but they thought they might for souls. Accordingly, there assembled crowds of Castleburghians on the green of Rockville, with a chair and a table, and a preacher with his head bound in a red handkerchief; and soon there was a sound of hymns, and a zealous call to come out of the darkness of Babylon. But this was more than Sir Roger could bear; he rushed forth with all his servants, keepers, and cottagers, overthrew the table, and routing the assembly, chased them to the boundary of his estate.

The discomfited Castleburghians now fulminated awful judgments on the unhappy Sir Roger, as a persecutor and malignant. They dared not enter again on his park, but they came to the very verge of it, and held weekly meetings on the highway, in which they sang and declaimed as loudly as possible,

that the winds might bear their voices to Sir Roger's ears.

To such a condition was now reduced the last of the long line of Rockville. The spirit of a policeman had taken possession of him; he had keepers and watchers out on all sides, but that did not satisfy him. He was perpetually haunted with the idea that poachers were after his game; that trespassers were in his woods. His whole life was now spent in strolling to and fro in his fields and plantations, and in prowling along his river-side. He looked under hedges, and watched for long hours under forest trees. If any one had a curiosity to see Sir Roger, they had only to enter his fields by the wood side, and wander a few yards from the path, and he was almost sure to spring out over the hedge, and in hurried and angry, almost stammering tones, demand their name and address. The descendant of the chivalrous and steel-clad De Rockvilles was sunk into

a restless spy on his own ample property. There was but one idea in his mind—encroachment. It was destitute of all other furniture but the musty technicalities of warrants and commitments. There was a stealthy and skulking manner in everything he did. He went to church on Sunday, but it was no longer by the grand iron-gate opposite to his house,—that stood generally with a large spider's web woven over the lock, and several others in the corners of the fine iron tracery, bearing evidence of the long period since it had been opened. How different to the time when Sir Roger and Lady Rockville had had these gates thrown wide on Sunday morning, and with all their train of household servants at their back, with true antique dignity, marched, with much proud humility, into the house of God. Now, Sir Roger—the solitary, suspicious, undignified Sir Roger, the keeper and policeman of his own property—stole in at a little

side-gate from his paddock, and back the same way, wondering all the time whether there was not somebody in his pheasant preserves, or Sunday trespassers in his grove.

If you entered his house, it gave you as cheerless a feeling as its owner. There was a conservatory, so splendid with rich plants and flowers in his mother's time, now a dusty receptacle of hampers, broken hand-glasses and garden tools. These tools could never be used, for the gardens had grown wild. Tall grass grew in the walks, and the huge unpruned shrubs disputed the passage with you. In the wood above the gardens, reached by several flights of fine, but now moss-grown steps, there stood a pavilion, which had once clearly been very beautiful. It was now damp and ruinous—its walls covered with greenness and crawling insects. It was a great lurking place of Sir Roger, when on the watch for poachers.

The line of the Rockvilles was evidently running fast out. It had reached the extremity of imbecility and contempt—it must soon reach its close.

Sir Roger used to make his regular annual visit to town ; but of late, when there he had wandered restlessly about the streets peeping into the shop-windows : and if it rained, he would stand under an entry for hours, waiting till it was gone over, rather than take a cab or omnibus. The habit of lurking and peering about was become fixed, and his feet bore him instinctively into those narrow and crowded alleys where swarm the poachers of the city—the trespassers and anglers in the game preserves and streams of humanity. He had lost all pleasure in his club ; the most exciting themes of political life retained no piquancy for him. His old friends ceased to find any pleasure in him. He was become the driest of all dry wells. Poachers, and anglers, and Methodists, haunted the wretched

purlieus of his fast fading-out mind, and he resolved to go to town no more. His whole nature was centred in his woods. He was for ever on the watch; and when at Rockville again, if he heard a door clap when in bed, he thought it a gun in his woods; and was up and out with his keepers.

Of what value was that magnificent estate to him? those superb woods; those finely-hanging cliffs; that clear and *riante* river, careering, travelling on, and taking a noble sweep below his window; that glorious expanse of most verdant meadows, stretching almost to Castleborough, and enlivened by numerous herds of the most beautiful cattle; those old farms and shady lanes overhung with hazel and wild rose; the glittering brook, and the songs of woodland birds—what were they to that worn-out old man, that victim to the delusive doctrine of blood, that man-trap, of an hereditary name?

There the poet could come and feel the presence of divinity in that noble scene, and hear sublime whispers in the trees, and create new heavens and new earths from the glorious charms of nature around him, and in one short hour live an empyrean of celestial life and love. There could come the very humblest children of the plebeian town, and feel a thrill of exquisite delight pervade their bosoms at the sight of the very flowers on the sod, and see heaven in the infinite blue above them. And poor Sir Roger, the holder, but not the possessor of all, walked only in a region of sterility, with no sublimer ideas than poachers and trespassers—no more rational enjoyment than the brute indulgence of hunting like a ferret, and seizing his fellow-men like a bulldog. He was a specimen of human nature degenerated; retrograded from the divine to the bestial, through the long-operating influences of false notions, and institutions con-

tinued beyond their time. He had only the soul of a keeper. Had he been only a keeper he had been a much happier man.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST OF A NEW LINE.

In Great Castleborough there lived a race of paupers. From the year of the 42nd of Elizabeth, or 1601, down to the present generation, this race maintained an uninterrupted descent. Like that of many a more worldly-favoured race, theirs was a descent; it had nothing of an ascent in it. But that is the fate of ancestry. A man on some particular occasion ascends; makes himself a mark in his time; perhaps a name in the world's annals, and from him his family *descends*.

The expression is perfectly correct; as the heralds truly have it; it descends, fades out, and is gone. It has lived? no, continued, a thousand years perhaps; it has descended,

and prided itself on descending. That was the case of the Rockvilles; and when we hear of families and persons illustriously or honourably descended, we hear an internal echo which says, "Yes—descended." The truly great man *ascends* from his ancestors.

There was a steady and unbroken line of paupers in Great Castleborough, as the parish books testify. No families had a more unquestionable pedigree. There was no flaw, no dubious spot in it. The parish books were the red-books of this race. No genealogy could bear a more rigid scrutiny than theirs. From generation to generation their demands on the parish funds stand recorded. There were no *lacunæ* in their career; there was no occasion for the herald to skip skilfully from cousin to doubtful cousin, nor great lawyers to cast a costly glamour over some delicate question of legitimacy. There never failed a rightful heir to their families. Fed on the bread of idleness and legal provision, these

people flourished, increased, and multiplied. Sometimes required to work for the weekly stipend which they received, they never acquired a taste for labour, or lost the taste for the bread for which they did not labour. These paupers regarded their maintenance by no means as a disgrace. They claimed it as a right—as their patrimony. They contended that one-third of the property of the Church had been given by benevolent individuals for the support of the poor, and that what the Reformation wrongfully deprived them of, the great enactment of Elizabeth rightfully—and only rightfully—restored.

Those who imagine that all paupers merely claim parish relief because the law has ordained it, commit a great error. There were numbers then who were hereditary paupers, on a higher principle even than hereditary peers, and that on a tradition carefully handed down, that they were only manfully claiming their own. They traced their claims from

the most ancient feudal times. They were none of your modern manufactures, the offspring of wretched political necessities. They came down from times when the lord was as much bound to maintain his villein in gross, as the villein was to work for the lord. These paupers were in fact, or claimed to be, the original *adscripti glebæ*, and to have as sound a claim to parish support as the landed proprietor had to his land. For this reason, in the old Catholic times, after they had escaped from villenage by running away from their hundred, and remaining absent for a year and a day, dwelling for that period in a walled town, these people were amongst the most diligent attendants at the abbey doors, and, when the abbeys were dissolved, were, no doubt, amongst the most daring of those thieves, vagabonds, and sturdy rogues who, after the Robin Hood fashion, beset the highways and solitary farms of England, and claimed their black-mail in a very uncere-

monious style. It was out of this class that Henry VIII. hanged his seventy-two thousand during his reign, and, as it is said, without appearing materially to diminish their number.

That they continued to "increase, multiply, and replenish the earth," overflowing all bounds, overpowering by mere populousness all the severe laws against them, of whipping, burning in the hand, in the forehead, or the breast, and hanging, and filling the whole country with alarm, is evidenced by the very Act of Elizabeth itself.

Amongst these hereditary paupers who, as we have said, were found in Castleborough, there was a family of the name of Deg. This family had never failed to demand and enjoy what it held to be its share of its ancient inheritance. It appeared from the parish records, that they practised, in different periods, the crafts of shoemaking, tailoring, and chimney-sweeping; but since the in-

vention of the stocking-frame they had, one and all of them, followed the profession of stocking-weavers ; or, as they were there called, stockingers. This was a trade which required no extreme exertion of the physical or intellectual powers. To sit in a frame, and throw the arms to and fro, was a thing that might be carried to a degree of extreme diligence, or be let down into a mere apology for idleness. An "idle stockinger" was then no very uncommon phrase, and the Degs were always classed under that head. Nothing could be more admirably adapted than this trade for building a plan of parish relief upon. The Degs did not pretend to be absolutely without work, or the parish authorities would soon have set them to some real labour —a thing that they particularly recoiled from, having a very old adage in the family, that "hard work was enough to kill a man."

There was, indeed, an anecdote of three of the Degs which was continually quoted as

exemplifying the three degrees of extreme indolence. According to this, three Degs were lying one fine autumn day under a neighbour's pear-tree. One of them, in a languid tone, said, "There! a pear has dropped." The second observed, still more languidly, "I wish I had it." The third was too lazy even to open his mouth to express such a wish, much less to move and get it.

The Degs, then, were seldom out of work; but they did not get enough, or do enough, to meet and tie. They had but little work if times were bad, and if times were good, they complained of large families and sickly wives and children. Be times what they would, therefore, the Degs were due and successful attendants at the parish pay-table. Nay, so much was this a matter of course, that they came at length not even to trouble themselves to receive their pay, but sent their young children for it; and it was duly paid. Did any parish officer, indeed, turn restive, and

decline to pay a Deg, he soon found himself summoned before a magistrate, and such pleas of sickness, want of work, and poor earnings brought forward, that he most likely got a sharp rebuke from the benevolent but uninquiring magistrate, and acquired a character of hard-heartedness that stuck to him.

So parish overseers learnt to let the Degs alone; and their children, thus regularly brought up to receive the parish money for their parents, were impatient, as they grew up, to receive it for themselves. Marriages in the Deg family were, consequently, very early, and there were plenty of instances of married Degs claiming parish relief under the age of twenty, on the plea of being the parents of two children. One such precocious individual being asked by a rather verdant officer why he was married before he was able to maintain a family, replied, in much astonishment, that he had married in order to maintain himself by parish assistance. That he

had never been able to maintain himself by his labour, nor ever expected to do it: his only hope, therefore, lay in marrying, and becoming the father of two children, to which patriarchal rank he had now attained, and demanded his "pay."

Thus had lived and flourished the Degs on their ancient patrimony, the parish, for upwards of two hundred years. Nay, we have no doubt whatever that, if it could have been traced, they had enjoyed an ancestry of paupers as long as the pedigree of Sir Roger Rockville himself. In the days of the most perfect villenage they had, doubtless, eaten the bread of idleness, and claimed it as a right. They were numerous, improvident, ragged in dress, and fond of an alehouse and gossip. Like the blood of Sir Roger, their blood had become peculiar through a long persistence of the same circumstances. It was become pure pauper blood.

The Degs married, if not entirely amongst

Degs, yet amongst the same class. None but a pauper would dream of marrying a Deg, even were she handsome as Helen of Troy. The Degs, therefore, were in constitution, in mind, in habit, and in inclination, paupers. But a pure and unmixed class of this kind does not die out like an aristocratic stereotype. It increases and multiplies. The lower the grade, the more prolific, as is sometimes seen on a large and even national scale. The Degs threatened, therefore, to become a most formidable clan in the lower purlieus of Castleborough ; but, luckily, there is so much virtue even in evils, that one not rarely cures another. War, the great evil, cleared the town of Degs.

Fond of idleness, of indulgence, of money easily got and as easily spent, the Degs were rapidly drained off by recruiting parties during the great French war. The young men enlisted, and were marched away ; the young women married soldiers that were

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quartered in the town from time to time, and marched away with them. There were eventually none of the once numerous Degs left, except a few old people, whom death was sure to draft off at no distant period into his regiment of the line which has no end. Parish overseers, magistrates, and master manufacturers felicitated themselves on this unhoped-for deliverance from the ancient family of the Degs.

But one cold, clear winter evening, the east wind piping his sharp, sibilant ditty in the hawthorn hedges, and poking his sharp fingers into the sides of well broad-clothed men by way of passing joke, Mr. Spires, a great manufacturer of Castleborough, driving in his gig some seven miles from the town, passed a poor woman with a stout child on her back. The large ruddy-looking man in the prime of life, and in the greatcoat and thick worsted gloves of a wealthy traveller, cast a glance at the wretched creature trudg-

ing heavily on, expecting a pitiful appeal to his sensibilities, and thinking it a bore to have to pull off a glove, and dive into his pocket for a copper; but to his surprise, there was no demand, only a low curtsey, and the glimpse of a face of singular honesty of expression, and of excessive weariness.

Spires was a man of warm feelings; he looked earnestly at the woman, and thought he had never seen such a picture of fatigue in his life. He pulled up und said,

"You seem very tired, my good woman."

"Awfully tired, sir."

"And are you going far to-night?"

"To Great Castleborough, sir, if God give me strength."

"To Castleborough!" exclaimed Mr. Spires, "why you seem ready to drop; you'll never reach it. You'd better stop at the next village."

"Ay, sir, it is easy stopping for those who have money."

"And you've none, eh?"

"As God lives, sir, I've a sixpence, and that's all."

Mr. Spires put his hand in his pocket and held out to her the next instant half-a-crown.

"There, stop, poor thing—make yourself comfortable—it's quite out of the question to reach Castleborough. But stay, are your friends living in Castleborough? What are you?"

"A poor soldier's widow, sir: and may God Almighty bless you," said the poor woman, taking the money, the tears standing in her large brown eyes as she curtseyed very low.

"A soldier's widow," said Mr. Spires. She had touched the softest place in the manufacturer's heart, for he was a very loyal man, and vehement champion of his country's honour in the war. "So young," said he, —"how did you lose your husband?"

"He fell, sir," said the poor woman,—but she could get no further; she suddenly caught up the corner of her grey cloak, covered her face with it, and burst into an excess of grief.

The manufacturer felt as if he had hit the woman a blow by his careless question. He sat watching her for a moment in silence, and then said—"Come, get into the gig, my poor woman; come, I must see you to Castleborough."

The poor woman dried her tears, and heavily climbed into the gig, expressing her gratitude in a very touching and modest manner. Spires buttoned the apron over her, and taking a look at the child, said in a cheerful tone to comfort her, "Bless me, but that is a fine, thumping fellow, though. I don't wonder you are tired, carrying such a load."

The poor woman pressed the stout child, apparently two years old, to her heart, as if

she felt it a great blessing, and no load. The gig drove rapidly on.

Presently, Mr. Spires resumed his conversation.

"So you are from Castleborough?"

"No, sir, my husband was."

"So: what was his name?"

"John Deg, sir."

"Deg?" said Mr. Spires; "Deg, did you say?"

"Yes, sir."

The manufacturer seemed to hitch himself off towards his own side of the gig, gave another look at her, and was silent. The poor woman seemed somewhat astonished at his look and movement, and was silent too.

After awhile Mr. Spires said again, "And do you hope to find friends in Castleborough? Had you none where you came from?"

"None, sir; none in the world!" said the poor woman, and again her feelings seemed too strong for her. At length she added,

"I was in service, sir, at Poole, in Dorsetshire, when I married; my mother only was living, and while I was away with my husband, she died. When—when the news came from abroad, that—when I was a widow, sir, I went back to my native place, and the parish-officers said I must go to my husband's parish lest I and my child should become troublesome."

"You asked relief of them?"

"Never! oh, God knows, no, never! My family have never asked a penny of a parish,—they would die first, and so would I, sir; but they said I might do it, and I had better go to my husband's parish at once and they offered me money to go."

"And you took it, of course."

"No, sir; I had a little money, which I had earned by washing and laundering; and I sold most of my things, as I could not carry them, and came off. I felt hurt, sir; my heart rose against the treatment of the parish,

and I thought I should be better amongst my husband's friends,—and my child would, if anything happened to me. I had no friends of my own."

Mr. Spires looked at the woman in silence.

"Did your husband tell you anything of his friends? What sort of a man was he?"

"Oh, he was a gay young fellow, rather, sir; but not bad to me. He always said his friends were well off in Castleborough."

"He did!" said the manufacturer, with a great stare, and as if bolting the words from his heart in a large gust of wonder.

The poor woman again looked at him with a strange look. The manufacturer whistled to himself, and giving his horse a smart cut with the whip, drove on faster than ever. The night was fast settling down; it was numbing cold; a grey fog rose from the river as they thundered over the old bridge; and tall engine chimneys, and black smoky

houses loomed through the dusk before them. They were at Castleborough.

As they slackened their pace up a hill at the entrance of the town, Mr. Spires again opened his mouth.

"I should be very sorry to hurt your feelings, Mrs. Deg," he said, "but I have my fears that you are coming to this place with false expectations. I fear your husband did not give you the truest possible account of his family here."

"Oh, sir! What—what is it?" exclaimed the poor woman; "in God's name, tell me!"

"Why, nothing more than this," said the manufacturer; "there are few of the Degs left here. They are old, and on the parish, and can do nothing for you."

The poor woman gave a deep sigh, and was silent.

"But don't be cast down," said Mr. Spires. He would not tell her what a pauper family it really was; for he saw that she was a

very feeling woman, and he thought that she would learn that soon enough. He felt that her husband had from vanity given her a false account of his connections; and he was really sorry for her.

"Don't be cast down!" he went on; "you can wash and iron, you say; you are young and strong; those are your friends. Depend on them, and they will be better to you than any other."

The poor woman was silent, leaning her head down on her slumbering child, and crying to herself; and thus they drove on through many long and narrow streets, with lights glaring from the shops, but with few people in the streets, and those hurrying shivering along the pavement, so intense was the cold. Anon, they stopped at a large pair of gates; and the manufacturer rang a bell, which he could reach from his gig; and the gates were presently flung open, and they drove into a spacious yard, with a large

handsome house, having a bright lamp burning before it, on one side of the yard, and tall warehouses on the other.

"Show this poor woman and her child to Mrs. Craddock's, James," said Mr. Spires, "and tell Mrs. Craddock to make them very comfortable; and if you will come to my warehouse to-morrow," added he, addressing the poor woman, "perhaps I can be of some use to you."

The poor woman poured out her heartfelt thanks, and following the old man-servant, soon disappeared, hobbling over the pebbly pavement with her living load, her limbs stiffened almost to stone by her fatigue and cold ride.

We must not pursue too minutely our narrative. Mrs. Deg was engaged to do the washing and getting up of Mr. Spires's linen, and the manner in which she executed her task, insured her recommendations to all their friends. Mrs. Deg was at once in

full employ. She occupied a neat house in a yard near the meadows below the town, and in these meadows she might be seen spreading out her clothes to whiten on the grass attended by her stout little boy. In the same yard lived a shoemaker, who had two or three children of almost the same age as Mrs. Deg's child. The children, as time went on, became playfellows. Little Simon might be said to have the free run of the shoemaker's house, and he was the more attracted thither by the shoemaker's birds, and his flute, on which he often played when his work was done.

Mrs. Deg took a great liking to the shoemaker: and he and his wife, a quiet, kind-hearted woman, were almost all the acquaintances that she cultivated. She had found out her husband's parents; but they were not of a description that at all pleased her. They were old and infirm, but they were of the true pauper breed, a sort of persons whom

Mrs. Deg had been taught to avoid and to despise. They looked on her as a sort of second parish, and insisted that she should come and live with them, and help to maintain them out of her earnings. But Mrs. Deg would rather that her little boy had died than have been familiarised with the spirit of these old people. Despise them she struggled hard not to do, and she agreed to allow them sufficient to maintain them, on condition that they desisted from any further application to the parish. It would be a long and disgusting tale to recount all the troubles, annoyances, and querulous complaints and even bitter accusations that she received from her connections, whom she could never satisfy; but she considered it one of her crosses in life, and patiently bore it, seeing that they suffered no real want, so long as they lived, which was for years; but she would never allow her little Simon to be with them alone.

The shoemaker neighbour was a stout protector to her against the greedy demands of the old people, and of others of the old Degs, and also against another class of inconvenient visitors, namely suitors, who saw in Mrs. Deg a neat and comely young woman, with a flourishing business, and a neat and well-furnished house, a very desirable acquisition. But Mrs. Deg had resolved never again to marry, but to live for the boy, and she kept her resolve with firmness and gentleness.

The shoemaker often took walks in the extensive town-meadows, to gather groundsel and plantain for his canaries and gorse-linnets, and little Simon Deg delighted to accompany him with his own children. There William Watson, the shoemaker, used to point out to the children the beauty of the flowers, the insects, and other objects of nature ; and while he sat on a stile and read in a little old book of poetry, as he often

used to do, the children sate on the summer grass, and enjoyed themselves in a variety of plays.

The effect of these walks, and the shoemaker's conversation on little Simon Deg, was such as never wore out of him through his whole life, and soon led him to astonish the shoemaker by his extraordinary conduct. He manifested the greatest uneasiness at their treading on the flowers in the grass; he would burst into tears if they persisted in it; and when asked why, he said they were so beautiful, and that they must enjoy the sunshine, and be very unhappy to die. The shoemaker was amazed, but indulged the lad's fancy. One day he thought to give him a great treat, and when they were out in the meadows, he drew from under his coat a bow and arrow, and shot the arrow high up into the air. He expected to see him in an ecstasy of delight; his own children clapped their hands in transport, but Simon

stood silent, and as if awestruck. "Shall I send up another?" asked the shoemaker.

"No, no!" exclaimed the child, imploringly. "You say God lives up there, and He mayn't like it."

The shoemaker laughed, but presently he said, as if to himself, "There is too much imagination there. There will be a poet there if we don't take care."

The shoemaker offered to teach Simon to read, and to solidify his mind, as he termed it, by arithmetic, and then to teach him to work at his trade. His mother was very glad; and thought shoemaking would be a good trade for the boy; and that with Mr. Watson she should have him always near her. He was growing now a great lad, and was especially strong, and of a frank and daring habit. He was greatly indignant at any act of oppression of the weak by the strong, and not seldom got into trouble by his championship of the injured

in such cases amongst the boys in the neighbourhood.

He was now about twelve years of age; when going one day with a basket of clothes on his head to Mr. Spires' for his mother, he was noticed by Mr. Spires himself from his counting-house window. The great war was raging; there was much distress amongst the manufacturers; the people were suffering, and exasperated against their masters. Mr. Spires, as a staunch tory, and supporter of the war, was particularly obnoxious to the workpeople, who uttered violent threats against him. For this reason his premises were strictly guarded, and at the entrance of his yard, just within the gates, was chained a large and fierce mastiff, his chain allowing him to approach near enough to intimidate any stranger, though not to reach him. The dog knew the people who came regularly about, and seemed not to notice them; but on the entrance of a stranger, he

rose up, barked, and came to the length of his chain. This always drew the attention of the porter, if he was away from his box, and few persons dared to pass till he came.

Simon Deg was advancing with the basket of clean linen on his head, when the dog rushed out, and barking loudly, came exactly opposite to him, within a few feet. The boy, a good deal startled at first, drew himself back against the wall, but at a glance perceiving that the dog was at the length of his tether, he seemed to enjoy his situation, and stood smiling at the furious animal, and lifting his basket with both hands above his head, nodded to him, as if to say—"Well, old boy, you'd like to eat me, wouldn't you?"

Mr. Spires, who sat near his counting-house window at his books, was struck with the bold and handsome bearing of the boy, and said to a clerk, "What boy is that?"

"It is Jenny Deg's," was the answer.

"Ha! that boy! Zounds! how boys do grow! Why, that's the child that Jenny Deg was carrying when she came to Castleborough, and what a strong, handsome, bright-looking fellow he is now."

As the boy was returning, Mr. Spires called him to the counting-house door, and put some questions to him as to what he was doing and learning, and so on. Simon, taking off his cap with much respect, answered in such a clear and modest way, with a voice which had so much feeling and natural music in it, that the worthy manufacturer was greatly taken with him.

"That's no Deg!" said he, when he again entered the counting-house, "not a bit of it. He's all Goodrick, or whatever his mother's name was, every inch of him."

The consequence of that interview was, that Simon Deg was very soon after perched on a stool in Mr. Spires' counting-house,

where he continued till he was twenty-two. Mr. Spires had no son, only a single daughter; and such were Simon Deg's talents, attention to business, and genial disposition, that at that age Mr. Spires gave him a share in the concern. He was himself now getting less fond of exertion than he had been, and placed the most implicit reliance on Simon's judgment and general management. Yet, no two men could be more unlike in their opinions beyond the circle of trade. Mr. Spires was a staunch tory of the staunch old school. He was for church and king, and for things remaining for ever as they had been. Simon, on the other hand, had liberal and reforming notions. He was for the improvement of the people, and their admission to many privileges. Mr. Spires, therefore, was liked by the leading men of the place, and disliked by the people. Simon's estimation was precisely in the opposite direction. But this did not disturb their friendship; it

required another disturbing cause, and that came.

Simon Deg and the daughter of Mr. Spires grew attached to each other; and as the father had thought Simon worthy of becoming a partner in the business, neither of the young people deemed that he could object to a partnership of a more domestic description. But here they made a tremendous mistake. No sooner was such a proposal hinted at, than Mr. Spires burst forth with the fury of all the winds from the bag of Ulysses.

"What! a Deg aspire to the hand of the sole heiress of the enormously opulent Spires?"

The very thought almost cut the proud manufacturer off with apoplexy. The ghosts of a thousand paupers rose up before him, and he was black in the face. It was only by a prompt and bold application of leeches and lancet, that the life of the great man was saved. But there was an end of all

further friendship between himself and the expectant Simon. He insisted that he should withdraw from the concern, and it was done. Simon, who felt his own dignity deeply wounded too, for dignity he had, though the last of a long line of paupers—his own dignity, not his ancestors'—took silently, yet not unrespectfully, his share—a good round sum, and entered another house of business.

For several years there appeared to be a feud, and a bitterness between the former friends; yet, it showed itself in no other manner, than by a careful avoidance of each other. The continental war came to an end; the manufacturing distress increased exceedingly. Then came troublous times, and a fierce warfare of politics. Great Castleborough was torn asunder by rival parties. On one side stood pre-eminent, Mr. Spires; on the other towered conspicuously, Simon Deg. Simon was growing rich, and was extremely popular. He was on all occasions the advocate

of the people. He said that he had sprung from, and was one of them. He had bought a large tract of land on one side of the town; and intensely fond of the country and flowers himself, he had divided this into gardens, built little summer-houses in them, and let them to the artizans. In his factory, he had introduced order, cleanliness, and ventilation. He had set up a school for the children, besides an evening and Sunday school for such as had begun to work in the factory or the loom, with a reading-room and conversation-room for the workpeople, and encouraged them to bring their families there, and enjoy music, books, and lectures. Accordingly, he was the idol of the people, and the horror of the old school of the manufacturers.

"A pretty upstart and demagogue I've nurtured," said Mr. Spires often to his wife and daughter, who only sighed and were silent.

Then came a furious election. The town

for a fortnight, more resembled the worst corner of Tartarus, than a Christian borough. Drunkenness, riot, pumping on one another, spencering one another, that is, tearing each other's coat-tails off, all sorts of violence and abuse ruled and raged, till the blood of all Castleborough was at boiling heat. In the midst of the tempest were everywhere seen, ranged on the opposite sides, Mr. Spires, now old and immensely corpulent, and Simon Deg, active, buoyant, zealous, and popular beyond measure. But popular though he still was, the other and old tory side triumphed. The people were exasperated to madness; and when the chairing of the successful candidate commenced, there was a terrific attack made on the procession by the defeated party. Down went the chair, and the new member, glad to escape into an inn, saw his friends mercilessly assailed by the populace. There was a tremendous tempest of sticks, brick-bats, paving-stones and rotten eggs. In the

midst of this, Simon Deg, and a number of his friends, standing at the upper window of an hotel, saw Mr. Spires knocked down, and trampled on by the crowd. In an instant, and before his friends had missed him from amongst them, Simon Deg was seen darting through the raging mass, cleaving his way with a surprising vigour, and gesticulating, and, no doubt, shouting vehemently to the rioters, though his voice was lost in the din. In the next moment his hat was knocked off, and himself appeared in imminent danger; but another moment, and there was a pause, and a group of people were bearing somebody from the frantic mob into a neighbouring shop. It was Simon Deg assisting in the rescue of his old friend and benefactor, Mr. Spires.

Mr. Spires was a good deal bruised, and wonderfully confounded and bewildered by his fall. His clothes were one mass of mud, and his face was bleeding copiously; but

when he had had a good draught of water, and his face washed, and had time to recover himself, it was found that he had received no serious injury.

"They had like to have done for me, though," said he.

"Yes; and who saved you?" asked a gentleman.

"Ay, who was it? who was it?" asked the really warm-hearted manufacturer. "Let me know; I owe him my life."

"There he is!" said several gentlemen at the same instant, pushing forward Simon Deg.

"What, Simon!" said Mr. Spires, starting to his feet. "Was it thee, my boy?" He did more—he stretched out his hand. The young man clasped it eagerly; and the two stood silent, and with a heartfelt emotion, which blended all the past into forgetfulness, and the future into a union more sacred than esteem.

A week hence, and Simon Deg was the son-in-law of Mr. Spires. Though Mr. Spires had misunderstood Simon, and Simon had borne the aspect of opposition to his old friend, in defence of conscientious principles, the wife and daughter of the manufacturer had always understood him, and secretly looked forward to some day of recognition and re-union.

Simon Deg was now one of the richest men in Castleborough. His mother was still living to enjoy his elevation. She had been his excellent and wise housekeeper, and she continued to occupy that post still.

CHAPTER III.

THINGS AS THEY USED TO BE.

One of the first things which Simon Deg did after Mr. Spires had so indignantly refused him his daughter on account of his origin, was to conceive and to carry out a resolve that, however the brand of pauperism might attach to his ancestors, none of its obligations should lie on him. "Let past generations settle their own accounts," he said; "but so far as this generation goes, there is not a man of it shall say that I owe the country, or rather this town, a farthing for life and growth. If my father ever received a bodle of parish-pay, which I know not, or his father or father's father for him, it shall be repaid." He went, therefore, suc-

cessively to the committee of the poor in each parish, of which the town contained three, and desired permission to search the pay-books of each of these parishes for the last eighty years. "Beyond that period," he said, "there can be no man living who ever paid a farthing to the poor-rates." He did not conceal the object of his research. It was to ascertain, to a fraction, what amount had been paid during that period to any individual of the name of Deg. His position in the town readily secured him this opportunity, and he immediately employed an able accountant in each parish to trace down, through the books, items of these payments. He promised, moreover, to the stipendiary, or sub-overseers of the poor, a handsome honorarium, to assist the accountant in seeing that his work was done completely, and in aiding him in any difficulty. He himself frequently attended, and made tests, by going over certain extents of these accounts, of the

accuracy with which they were done. It was a great labour, and was not completed much under a year. But it was accomplished at last, and the result was a statement of several thousand pounds as having been paid to persons of the name of Deg. This amount Simon Deg paid over with great satisfaction to the respective committees, and took receipts for it. The parish officers represented to him that there was no reason whatever that he should make so extraordinary a refundment to the parish, from which neither he himself nor his father in his own person could be shown to have derived a penny. Still more, they represented that Mr. Deg could not be descended from all the Degs; he could only have descended in one line, and from that specific line did he only incur even the shadow of an obligation to the parishes.

Simon Deg replied, that that was true; but, on the other hand, there was a female

side to the line, the fathers and mothers of women who married Degs, and daughters of Degs who married and passed under other names, had swelled the account. He therefore requested to be allowed to pay the whole account, as it appeared under the name of Deg ; and this was done. He observed, that he did not wish to dictate in any way the manner in which these sums should be expended, but he thought that the whole of them might with advantage be employed in extending and rendering more comfortable those parts of the workhouses where the aged paupers or the sick were accommodated; and this suggestion was fully and freely complied with.

This act of Simon Deg's, demonstrating a feeling of such a profound sense of honour and integrity, made a grand impression on his townspeople, and raised him still higher in public estimation. In the course of his inquiry he made the discovery that the family

name was in reality Degge, and had been thus spelled from the earliest period till within the last half of the last century. He therefore resumed the dropped letters, as giving a greater finish of the name to the eye; and saying pleasantly that, as he had now discharged the debts of his progenitors, at least to this generation, he thought he might be allowed to take the two last letters out of pawn. Henceforth, therefore, he and every one else wrote him Simon "Degge."

Not long after his marriage, he bought a farm at Hillmartin, a village not far from Rockville. He was naturally of an active temperament, was fond of riding, and took a great fancy to farming and shooting. These divertisements were all afforded him by this little estate. After close confinement in his counting-house, he liked to get on his horse, and ride briskly out of town, over the old Trent Bridge, and up the winding way to his farm. Hillmartin was about three miles out,

and stood on a fine, airy elevation, overlooking the country round, and from this side of it giving a full view of Castleborough. Simon's farm lay a little over the hill beyond Hillmartin, and stretched in one direction towards Gotham, and in another towards the estate of Sir Benjamin Bullockshed.

Simon Degge's purchase of this farm was a subject of great annoyance to Sir Benjamin, who was very anxious to have it, as it lay alongside of his woods and game preserves. The fact of seeing his pheasants, which had found a favourite, because a plentiful feeding-place, on this farm, shot down by Mr. Degge and his numerous friends from Castleborough, was, in truth, as great a misfortune as Sir Benjamin well could imagine to himself. For a quarter of a mile these woods of his ran along the corn-lands of this farm. The previous farmer had complained in vain of the depredations of the game—hares, rabbits and pheasants—which issued out of the preserves

in legions. He was told that he must fence them out, but the fence was Sir Benjamin's; and the farmer dared no more to put a stick into it to stop their runs, than he dared have taken a stick to Sir Benjamin himself. His growing corn was trodden down by the hares and rabbits; the hares, according to their habit, cut paths through it, and made play-grounds in it; the rabbits cropped it as fast as it grew for fifty yards, all along the wood-sides. What escaped and went into ear was regularly eaten up by the pheasants. They sat on the hedges along the woodside as tame as barn-door fowls, knowing well that they were under powerful protection, and during harvest, if a daring waggoner snapped his whip at them, they disdained to move. On a fine afternoon, so long as there was anything to pick on the stubble, you might see them feeding in flocks of a hundred together, as quietly as fowls in a barn-yard.

The nuisance of this great game-manu-

factory, ruinous to the farmer, had compelled one tenant after another to throw the farm up. In fact, no one knowing the farm would take it ; they were only men from a distance who did so, and were in terrible but vain trepidation when they discovered the real nature of the game-preserving incubus that lay upon the land. In itself the land was excellent, and, therefore, a stranger examining it, who had not already lived in a game-preserving country, was readily taken in by it. If the farmer, on discovering the alarming evil, complained, the answer from Sir Benjamin's steward was, as I have said, "You can stop the runs in the hedges ;" but if the farmer did stop them, he found the stoppage very soon removed by the keepers in their nocturnal rounds. One bold farmer had kept terriers to scour the woodsides ; but he soon found his dogs, when they followed the game into the wood, shot, or trapped in the iron traps so freely used by

our English gamekeepers, who are the greatest and most extensive animal torturers that the world ever knew.

The farm, belonging to a gentleman of Lincolnshire, he had, by the frequent change of tenants, grown out of love with it, and had offered it to Sir Benjamin at a moderate price ; but Sir Benjamin, who did not believe any one thereabout would dare to come between him and the vendor, was standing out in the secure expectation of getting it at a very low figure, when Simon Degge, who was inquiring for such a farm, not far from town, heard of it from a lawyer in Castleborough who had carried on the negotiations with Sir Benjamin for the owner. This gentleman was much disgusted with the gross selfishness, the many delays, and haughty conduct of Sir Benjamin, and was delighted at the opportunity of putting the property at once and for ever out of his power. Mr. Degge closed with the conditions of sale at

once, and as the whole of the purchase-money was ready, in a month the farm was fully conveyed to him, and put into his possession.

The consternation and indignation of Sir Benjamin on receiving this intelligence may be imagined. He saw at once that the tables were now most completely turned against him. He had no longer a half-informed and comparatively poor farmer to contend with, but a young man of great acknowledged ability and wealth, as well as activity of character. Instead of telling Mr. Degge to put sticks and bushes into the runs of the hares, rabbits, and pheasants, which his keepers could pull out again, he himself ordered the fences all along Mr. Degge's farm to be made game-tight. A fence, inside the hawthorn-fence, of stakes about two feet long, which were driven down nearly in contact, side by side, was made to prevent egress from the preserves to the farm. But all this did not

avail. The pheasants, as the corn ripened, flew over the fences, and fed freely on Mr. Degge's corn. The hares travelled round and squatted themselves down thickly in the green crops of corn, grass, and clover; and the rabbits burrowed under, requiring continually the stopping of their holes: for although the rabbits were less cared for by Sir Benjamin, they were more cared for by his keepers, who made a profitable perquisite out of them.

On his part, Mr. Degge did not trouble himself at all about a certain amount of damage done by this game to his crops along the woodside; for the money value did not distress him, and he looked on that part of the farm as a nursery for the game which he meant to invite his Castleborough friends in the autumn to shoot.

But the annoyance to Sir Benjamin and his friends did not end here. Scattered about on that side of the country lay the estates of

a number of squires—the Tenterhooks, Sheepshanks, Otterbrooks, Swagsides, &c.—who were of a thoroughly countryfied school. They were men not destitute of a certain amount of education, but who had no tastes beyond those of living on their property, and being the lords paramount as far as it extended. To be the great men of their little ancestral spots of earth; to rule over the farmers; to rear and destroy game; to officiate as magistrates, and convict poachers and petty culprits—that was the extent of their ambition. They seldom frequented the metropolis, or mixed in the society of the more elevated and refined aristocracy. They formed a circle of society of their own, looking proudly down on the moneyed men of the market town, on the farmers and villagers around them—at once ignorant of all superior knowledge, proud, and arbitrary.

That a man of the manufacturing town

should have dared to step in, and catch away a valuable farm from before Sir Benjamin Bullockshed's very nose, and, as they said, in actually gasping astonishment, whilst he was in negotiation for it, was a piece of audacity which really took away their breath. It was ominous of fresh attempts of the kind. The sanctity of the country and of game was no longer secure from the unhallowed inroads of plebeian audacity. Sir Roger Rockville, whose property also at one point came up to Mr. Degge's farm, was in a state of most imbecile exasperation at this event. The dreaded manufacturing town was thus already marching into the very heart of the country; and of the manufacturing town, the very worst in his eyes of its odious population. For who was this Degge? he asked. A pauper, and the last of a long line of paupers. It mattered not that Mr. Degge had most fully discharged the pauper debt so far as this generation was concerned. To Sir Roger it was only another

proof of the upstart pride and abundance of money of this dangerous class.

The sensation which this shocking event, as it was called, created in the whole circle of this squirearchy was visible at the meetings of these men of the earth, earthy, at their dinner-parties at each other's houses, and at their meetings at the justice-rooms, and their morning rides to one another's houses. A feeling of strange inveteracy was entertained against Simon Degge. If any of them met him on the high-way as they rode to or from Castleborough, they scowled at him as though he had been a most suspicious character. More than once, when two of them were together, he had heard them remark to one another—for it was done loud enough for him to hear it—"That is that upstart pauper, Degge." If any labourer of his could be caught on any pretence, and brought before them, as magistrates, he was sure to be handled with the utmost severity and the least possible modi-

cum of justice; and when Mr. Degge went forward to speak a word in his defence, he was sure to be treated with a marked contempt, and even incivility.

This proceeding did not tend on Mr. Degge's part to excite any pleasant feelings in his bosom towards these lords of the soil; but he maintained a demeanour of true gentlemanliness and self-respect. At the same time that he certainly felt a great satisfaction in the idea of the sweeping devastation of the game which he and his friends would make in the autumn, and which he was sure no precautions could prevent making its way to his fields so long as there was a better pasture there, or whilst he scattered a quantity of barley on his stubbles, after the corn naturally shed on them had been gathered off by the pheasants.

Such was the state of feelings all round Simon Degge's new farm. So far as he himself was concerned, it seemed only to amuse

him and his town friends, but to the whole squiral group, including Sir Roger Rockville, it was an acute, and promised to become a chronic condition of gall and wormwood. Mr. Degge brought his mother to live at the house belonging to the farm, for she delighted in the country ;—not at the farm-house, for there he had a bailiff, but in a large old house at the village of Hillmartin itself, with a fine old-fashioned garden ; and there himself and Mrs. Degge spent a great deal of the fine summer weather.

Simon Degge had also removed William Watson from his cottage by the farm meadow, and from his trade, and he was now acting as a sort of orderly at Mr. Degge's chief manufactory. He occupied the lodge, and walked about, and saw that all was safe, and moving as it should do.

There were several wealthy and intelligent families in the neighbourhood of Mr. Degge's farm, who, however, at once acknowledged

the distinguished merit and virtues of this young man, and who did not hesitate to call on him and Mrs. Degge, much to the disgust of the class of country gentlemen of whom I have spoken. These, it must be admitted, had indeed little in common with men of game and warrants, and did not stand very highly in their favour before. Let us see whether they may not present a more agreeable aspect to us.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOODBURNS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS.

Amongst the families which called on the Degges was that of Mr. Leonard Woodburn, of Woodburn Grange. The Woodburns did not belong to the so-called great families of the county, but to those of smaller but independent estate, whose heads were formerly classed under the name of yeomen. Mr. Woodburn was the possessor of about four hundred acres of freehold land, beautifully situated about a mile beyond Rockville, in the vicinity of the Trent, and beautifully cultivated. The house was one of those old Elizabethan ones with a variety of projections, pointed gables, and mullioned windows. The chimneys were of the cross-banded and

ornamented kind which are now regarded as extremely beautiful, and, indeed, they had been thought so a good while ago, for the father of Sir Thomas Tenterhook, when rebuilding Tenterhook Hall, had asked the father of the present Mr. Woodburn if he had any objection to sell them. A proposal, which Mr. Woodburn had with true yeoman feeling of independence, regarded as so great an insult, that he turned his back on the baronet as he sat at his gate on horseback, and in presence of his groom, and closing the gate pretty sharply, walked into the house without deigning a reply.

The present Mr. Woodburn, who had been the only son, was a man of a liberal education, fond of classical literature, and more deeply learned in all the history, both general and family, of the county, than any other man in it. Nay, there was scarcely a family of any note in England of which he did not possess a knowledge which continually sur-

prised you. He had a real love for topography and family history, which had led him, as it would seem, insensibly to acquire not only this knowledge of domestic annals, but of the titles of almost all the estates in the county, many copies of which, curious and important in their way, he possessed; and this knowledge made him a great authority in cases of disputed title, and had led him to decide the issue of several most noted trials. He had a habit also of noting down all sorts of curious facts which came to his knowledge either in the course of his reading of books, or of the newspapers, or which he heard verbally. These *curiosa* had accumulated into several volumes, which he kept locked up in his desk, and which he would bring out occasionally as something of public interest was occurring, or as something in conversation had suggested the reference. A somewhat odd medley a stranger would have regarded the contents of these volumes,

for amongst public and important facts, would be found jotted down birth-days, dates of weddings, and funerals of his family or neighbours; and even remarkable cases of prolificness of fowls, cattle, and fruit-trees on his farm. There was an entry of the turkey, or the hen that had laid away in the copse or the thicket, and came forth unexpectedly with some fifteen or twenty pouts, or chickens. The tame hawk, which was reared by George, his son, and suddenly flying away, became not only wild, but the scourge of his poultry-yard, by making continual visits to it, till at length shot, stands in immediate succession to the history of the lawyer of the neighbouring town, who, reared at the cost of the clergyman of Cotmanhaye, whose shoeblack and errand boy he had originally been, had grown rich by harassing the poor people of the country round by all sorts of vexatious suits.

Mr. Woodburn was a quiet gentleman, of

s mewhat above the middle stature, now approaching fifty. He would not at that time of day have been addressed by letter as esquire, though every man who is not exactly a sweep or a costermonger is so now. He would be written down, however, Leonard Woodburn of Woodburn, gent., in any public document, or countys ummons on judicial service. Mr. Woodburn might be seen daily riding on a good sturdy horse about his farm, and in harvest time he did not hesitate to take a hand at raking or forking in the hay-field, or binding after his reapers in the corn-field ; and on such occasions his children would turn out for a frolic, rather than for serious work. His harvest done, Leonard Woodburn shot over his own land, accompanied by his son George, now just come of age, and who was treading in his father's steps, being fond of both agricultural pursuits and of the gun.

Mrs. Woodburn was a fine, large, comely

woman, who, though as well educated as the ladies generally of her day, and fond of hearing books read in winters' evenings rather than reading them herself, had her heart and pride in her house and her dairy. Churning, cheese-making, looking after her fowls, her eggs, her calves, and pigs, and pigeons, her ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea-fowls, her fruit both of garden and orchard, storing it up, or preserving it; these were the great business of her daily life, and afforded her a perpetual satisfaction. It was a real delight to see Mrs. Woodburn amid her daily duties of this kind, with her handsome, sunny, smiling face, and tall and ample but active figure, directing her maids, or helping even in an emergency, or, to instruct a novice, kneeling on a soft bass, leaning over the side of the large brass pan, with her fair, full, and finely rounded arms bared to near the shoulder, crushing down the curd in the whey, or crumbling it and pressing it into the

vat. Or you might see her surrounded by a large flock of glossy pigeons in the farm-yard, who had descended from their tower surmounting one of the buildings to receive her daily bounty. Not that Mrs. Woodburn deemed it her express duty to feed any of the farm-yard creatures; that belonged to the men-folk, who not only foddered horses and cows, but fed pigs and poultry, and the pigeons came down quickly and put in for their share with the numerous and scuffling family of ducks, geese, turkeys, and all the rest of them.

It was the custom of farm-houses, and the custom reigned at Woodburn Grange, for the mistress of the house to receive the profits on pigs, calves and poultry, with all their eggs, feathers, or other appurtenances. These were her perquisites, with the butter, in most cases, to furnish her wardrobe and for spending money. It was, therefore, natural that the farmer's wife should keep a patronising eye

on the creatures within her province, and Mrs. Woodburn thus frequently made her visit to the farm-yard; saw whether the pigs were well fed and bedded, and that all the feathered flocks in the yard, or in the paddock, or on the pond were prosperous. The dairymaid fed the calves till they were ready for the butcher, or to be turned out into the orchard, where they at first galloped with cocked tails, to and fro, with a frantic velocity that made it marvellous that they did not crack their silly, but joyful skulls against the trees. For some time after their liberation from the calf-house to daylight and freedom, they were the dairymaid's care, and Mrs. Woodburn taking her rambles through the ample kitchen-garden, could stand and survey the infant herd with professional and a sort of motherly satisfaction.

Besides their son George, the Woodburns had two daughters, the elder one, who was really the oldest of the three children, was the

sedate, but kindly Ann. Ann at this epoch was four or five-and-twenty: of middle stature, an extremely neat figure; of a very sweet, serious countenance. Quiet, thoughtful, very prudent in her disposition, but with warm and deep, but not demonstrative feelings. Ann loved music, and played well on the piano, on which she was frequently called to charm away the evening hours when the family was assembled. She was fond of reading, but not of a very wide range of literature. She had her favourite books of poetry and piety in her own room, and had the strongest attachment to certain authors. They were those who touched her heart rather than excited her imagination, and their thoughts and sentiments were familiar to her mind as her own thoughts. In the light literature of the day she took comparatively little interest, though she was ever ready to read to her mother what she liked. Ann devoted herself to the cares of

the house, but not of the farm. She saw that the meals were all duly prepared and served: saw that all the rooms were kept in nicest order; helped often to make a pudding or a pie, and took care, if guests were expected, that all was in order to receive and entertain them. Besides these duties, Ann loved the garden, rejoiced in tending the flowers, and looking after the bees, which had a large shed, and occupied several shelves in it with their hives towards the lower and sunniest corner of the garden. Such was Ann, quiet, cheerful, loving, and busy, but never bustling. Every one relied much on her clear, good sense and loving interest in them: every one consulted her in their difficulties, and received from her almost invariably, the very wisest counsels. Mr. Woodburn said Ann was like many other still waters, she was deep, and his familiar name for her was, "Old Sobersides."

The last of the flock was the lively, laugh-

ing Letitia, seldom called anything but Letty. Sweet Letty was about seventeen ; with all the vivacity, and eager frank life of a school-girl. In fact, she was that till the other day. Now, she was the sunshine, the flying, quivering sunshine called Jack-a-dandy, sent by reflection from a basin of water over walls and ceilings in blithest dance. Letty, like the Jack-a-dandy, was here and there, in the house, in the garden, full of joy and love of all things around her ; with a face more charming than beautiful, all smiles and frolic, Letty was ready to lend a helping hand to her mother or sister; full of talk and question, making every one glad with her own gladness, and ready to take a stroll or a ride with her father or George, and to astonish them with the frank, open, genuine expressions of her young and innocent heart. Everything they told her of the people or the things amid which they lived interested her, and any relation of cruel or unkind treatment of any

one, fetched up the colour of a most lovely roseate indignation to her young, pure cheek, and the warmest expressions of it to her tongue. Such was blithe Letty—simple, yet shrewd, loving and light-hearted, the happy embodiment of ardent and out-blossoming womanhood.

But Woodburn Grange was a spot made for a happy home, for substantial ease and abundance, not for grandeur. There was everything there which enabled its possessors to enjoy the country. A handsome income ; all the rural luxuries of life ; horses, an open, but not a close carriage, a boat on the charming river below, hearts ready to love good and intelligent neighbours, and such neighbours to love.

The old house stood in its ample gardens. A low brick wall, surmounted by a hedge of roses fenced it in from the road, which ran by from the village to Cotmanhaye, and further up the valley. A straight walk led up

to the handsome, ample porch—you could not enter the garden in a carriage, but must walk up it,—in summer, amid a glow and perfume of flowers and a murmur of bees, and a flickering dance of butterflies, that was delicious. Around and beyond the house extended the flower-garden with evergreens, and here and there a fruit-tree. Then down the slope stretched the kitchen-garden, with its tall south fruit wall, with its trellises of roses and jasmines bordering beds of raspberries and gooseberries. Its abundant growth of peas, beans, and all vegetables, its asparagus beds, strawberry beds, beds of salsify and scorzonera ; its quince and medlar and filbert trees. Then, below still, stretched an old orchard, with seats here and there under its trees, some of the old trees stooping one way, some another ; and at the bottom ran the Trent, in phrase of Christopher North, "one of the sincerest streams in England."

Tolerably elevated stood the house, over-

looking undulating fields, studded with cattle and sheep, or waving with corn, the patrimonial estate, and beyond them the woods of Cotmanhaye, and across the river an expanse of level meadows of some miles in width, with the ruddy walls of the village of Breton bounding them. On the other hand, southward, rose a range of sand cliffs, at the foot of which ran the highway from Rockville to Cotmanhaye, and still beyond the cliffs, and the patches of trees on their brow, rose the country to the large farming village of Hillmartin.

Leonard Woodburn, of Woodburn Grange, though styled but yeoman, had a homestead which a king might envy, and when Simon and Mrs. Degge returned the Woodburns' call, they could not sufficiently express their delight at it, and went over the house and the cheese-chamber, with its growing display of goodly cheeses, over the farm-yard, and through garden and orchard. They were charmed with the view from the windows,

which were different from their own, and no less with the kindly intelligence of the Woodburns themselves, free, simple, and at ease; and inly promised themselves much pleasure in their friendship, which they resolved to cultivate.

Before rambling farther in our discoveries in this neighbourhood, we have still a friend of ours to introduce at the Grange, and then a promenade to make through the village—at least to make a passing note of it, and say, "Here lives so-and-so, and there lives somebody else." Our acquaintance at the Grange is only a servant, however. It is Betty Trapps, a sort of miscellany of housemaid and cook, in past days adding something of the nurse to the rest of her duties. Betty has lived with the Woodburns since she was five-and-twenty, and she is now—let me see—what? Five-and thirty? Yes—she has lived at least fifteen years at the Grange, and that makes her—upon my word!—forty!

And yet Betty does not look more than five-and-thirty. She is middle-sized, middle-bulkish in body, but lithe and active. Never idle, never weary, never ill, never grumbling, but with a wit and a will of her own, and always ready to give, as she says, as good as she gets. In fact, they must be awake that venture on a jest or trick with Betty. She is the freest of free-spoken women: Mr. Woodburn, who likes a good-natured nickname, calls her "Meg Merrymouth." She says often what she thinks—almost unmercifully; and yet Betty is full of kindness, and is knowing and shrewd. There is nobody thereabout that can see half so thoroughly through those she comes into contact with. But we shall see Betty Trapps again, for she says she means to stay at the Grange as long as there is a tile on the house, unless Master should discharge her for chaffing a little, and she does not think he will. And she has given a good many proofs that she means to keep

her word, for Betty is a Methodist, and is a woman of consequence at chapel and at the class, and has had a good many offers of marriage from the brethren, some very well to do; and Betty has so far always said, "No, thank you." Civilly, be it understood, and as secretly as possible, for she does not really, smart as she is sometimes, like to hurt any one's feelings. But Betty is shrewdly supposed to have saved a pretty little stock of money, having lived so long in a good place, and never indulged in finery, and the brethren may not be always so easily rebuffed, for this is one of those charms which continue growing even when others fade. However, the tiles on Woodburn Grange are extremely good yet, so we shall see.

A little above Woodburn Grange, and nearer to Rockville, lies the village of Woodburn. It is not very large, and chiefly built round a spacious green, on which the young men in summer evenings enjoy their games

of cricket, ninepins, bowls, and quoits. At the corner where the road enters the green from Rockville, and, of course, from Castleborough, stands the blacksmith's shop, where frequently two or three farm-horses stand waiting to be shod; and a number of ploughs and harrows lie expecting repairs. There the sturdy smith, Job Latter, is generally found working and perspiring, and conversing with a number of village-lads and young men hanging about, whom he contrives to disperse when they incommode him, by rubbing his hot iron in his heap of sand, and thus sending a storm of burning stars in every direction, that makes a sudden scamper. Not far thence, a congregation of dilapidated carts, waggons, and disabled wheels, mark the shop of Will Spokeshave, the wainwright. In the centre of the south side of the green, rises a somewhat large old house with porch and tall gabled roof, which is the village school, frequented, more particularly in win-

ter, by the farmers' and labourers' sons of the neighbourhood. This school has now for master a worthy half-Welshman, named Howell Crusoe (after his mother and father), a man noted far around as "a great scollard"—a very great, long-headed "scollard." He has written a book to teach boys good manners, and a genuine curiosity it is in its way; and his profound acquaintance with the customs of polite society may be at once discerned by the following rules in this his "Book of Etiquette for Boys"—a work now become very rare, yet of which an odd, and it must be admitted, a *very* odd copy, may now and then be met with on the shelves of the bookworms of Castleborough:—"When a gentleman or lady speaks to you"—thus teaches Howell Crusoe boy-etiquette—"immediately touch your forehead with the back of your right hand; then place three fingers of the same hand between the buttons of the centre of your waistcoat, and expect the

observations of your superior in an attitude of easy but respectful attention. At any remark of the respected lady or gentleman, incline your head with a graceful dignity, and scrape backward with your left foot. Whenever you are asked to sit down in company, place one leg over the other; rest your elbow on the elevated knee, repose your chin on the hand of the same arm, with two fingers extended upright between your cheek and your ear. In an attitude at once so easy and so graceful, await the wisdom which is sure to fall from beauty, learning, and experience, and hoard up the precious results for the future occasions of life, as the busy bee hoards up the honey of spring for the winter of age."

A company of boys educated by Crusoe, or on Crusoe's plan, seated round a room in his most approved attitude, must have been a pleasing sight!

Crusoe is the oracle of the "Grey Goose,"

the public-house opposite ; for he has a number of theories which he there defends against all comers, and very few comers, it may be supposed, ever go away having won any sort of advantage over the erudite Howell Crusoe.

Howell has distinguished himself in his determined onslaughts on bull-baiting, dog-fighting, badger-baiting, cock-fighting, and the like ; and has been supported in these eventually successful achievements by Jasper Heritage, David Qualm, and Sylvanus Crook, persons as yet unknown to the reader, but to whom I most probably shall, by permission, very soon introduce them. Howell does not find, however, that he can altogether dispense with boy-baiting, or beating with his cane. He manages to frighten the young ones, nevertheless, by threatening to "look over their heads to the wall," which has something awful in it to their imaginations; and he thinks, in time, cudgels may be used to drive beasts with, and boys be ruled by appealing

to what Sylvanus Crook calls their "inner man." Howell Crusoe is also secretary of both men and women's clubs, and is much disgusted with the drunkenness displayed by these members at Whitsuntide; finds, indeed, he has a rude and uncouth generation to deal with, and makes but little progress in refining them. In a word, Howell Crusoe is an out-and-out social reformer.

Not far from the village on the Rockville-road, you see a large pair of gates, a capacious lodge with flowering plants in the windows, and under one of them a little wooden trough, very much resembling a pig-trough. It is, in fact, a trough which Sylvanus Crook, the good Quaker, who lives at this gentleman's lodge, has set there for the refreshment of dogs, having often seen them passing with lolling tongues, and eyes anxiously cast about for water. Sylvanus soon had his first trough stolen, but this he has secured by stout iron fastenings to the wall, and he trusts that he

relieves much canine discomfort. He says, indeed, that he has never had the pleasure of seeing a dog drink at it; neither has Dorothy, his wife; but he hopes they do. At least they have the opportunity.

But this lodge is but the entrance to the extensive grounds and house of Jasper Heritage, the wealthy Quaker banker of Castleborough. Enter; advance up the well-kept carriage-drive, and very soon you will see standing on an open, level, extensive lawn, a very large square brick house. It is one of the country houses so frequently seen, which are built at no expense of architecture whatever. It is as simple and as exactly square as any box or square block of stone that you can see anywhere. Take a good, big deal box, chalk on it a door in the centre, and two or three rows of windows, and a parapet-wall at the top, showing no roof, and then you have the exact representation of some hundreds, or, indeed, thousands of houses which

raise themselves as proudly on the soil of England, as if they boasted all the architectural graces ever displayed. And truly they are houses capable of lodging and entertaining a great number of people in the perfection of comfort. They are ample, convenient, and opulent abodes of opulent families, though they look so cubical and featureless outside. This house of Mr. Jasper Heritage, is, moreover, made somewhat attractive by such ornaments as the very simple taste of its owner could, or perhaps would, give it. It has an ample portico on plain Tuscan pillars; a broad flight of easy stone steps up to it; a very highly-burnished brass-knocker and bell-handle; and in a row under the windows, a range of splendid orange-trees in large square tubs, and a fountain in the centre of the lawn, which plays on particular occasions. Right and left you see broad, exquisitely rolled gravel walks going off into very tempting-looking

shrubberies and gardens. Ah! it will be a great treat to penetrate in there, and see all the lawns and alleys, and gardens, ponds, and conservatories, and snug summer-houses in corners, which give you from a second storey a prospect over the country round. But we must come again some day for that. We shall get an invitation. Now it is enough to say, that in that house is not Jasper Heritage; he is just now at his bank in Castleborough, whither his coachman, Sylvanus Crook, also a Friend, and dressed in the plainest drab, with the most approved cocked-hat and knee-breeches of that society, and that day, has driven him, and will fetch him back, at four o'clock, in the handsome, roomy dark-green family carriage, without, I may add, the slightest vanity of coat-of-arms, crest, or any such badge of a worldly pride. At home, are —but not to be intruded upon by us at this moment, for they are busy cutting out a very multitude of clothes for the Dorcas Society—

yes, there are Rebecca Heritage, the wealthy banker's wife, and Millicent Heritage, the fair and only child of this wealthy banker—only think of that! What! you say, is the young lady handsome? Oh, don't be so curious! Wait a bit. I will tell you about the mother first. Mrs. Rebecca Heritage is a lady of apparently forty-five. She is not very tall, she is not very short, she is not very thin, nor very stout; but she is fair, very fair, yet with dark hair neatly laid back from the centre of the forehead under a very white and very plain Quaker cap. A silk gown she wears—pale very dovelike silk; a white muslin handkerchief covers her shoulders and bosom, and she has extremely well-cut features. Her nose is perfect. Her eyes blue-grey, large, and thoughtful. Her forehead is broad and ample, and, in a word, she looks like a grave and comely duchess dressed up for a female Friend in a domestic theatrical. In that noble face—in that smooth, soft, yet healthy

face—where no approach to a wrinkle, one thinks, would ever dare to come—there is a thought, a spirit, a fire—yes, a fire—even in the calm that rules all in that tranquil aspect. Depend upon it, Rebecca Heritage is no common woman. She is like one of those women Friends, who used to enter Whitehall, and tell the king-destroyer Cromwell or the laughing, reckless Charles II., in tones that made them still as children, of the oppression of the saints which they were perpetrating; of the foul and hideous dungeons in which they were holding those whose only crime was a religion of peace. There! if you want the picture of a mother in Israel—of a brave, self-possessed, yet loving and large-hearted woman—send for a painter, and let him pourtray Rebecca Heritage.

But I see you glancing aside from this figure of heroic piety and peace to that gentle creature at her side. Lovely, modest, retiring Millicent. So rich, and yet nature

has heaped all those other riches upon her. Look at that very fair face, at those clear blue eyes, and yet shaded by such long dark eye-lashes, such finely-arched jetty eye-brows and hair. Why it is not an English, but a genuine Eastern beauty. That form and face were evidently made for an Asiatic palace, and they are here, in a Quaker house, and busy in cutting out jackets and petticoats for the squalid brats of the next town. Come away! It is too dangerous here. I must show you Still Lodge, it is just outside the grounds here. There! You see it—a genuine little wren's nest: and in it dwells David Qualm, the brother-in-law of Jasper Heritage, and Dorothy Qualm, his wife. Oh, most peaceable and peace-loving people! You will come again,—don't linger. Remember when you inquire for the house of Jasper Heritage, it is called Fair-Manor.

One more introduction, and then enough for the present. We must now turn back,

pass through the villages of Rockville and Woodburn, give a nod to pleasant Woodburn Grange as we pass, and so on a mile farther, skirting the feet of the sand-cliffs, till we stand on a fine mount with a modern-looking mansion, also of brick; they all are so round about here. This mansion is the seat of Sir Emanuel Clavering, a baronet of an old family. Finely stands the house with its large bay windows looking out on its velvet lawn, from the soft, smooth turf of which spring stately elms and ashes, with that luxury of neatness which only aristocratic trees can wear. Finely sweep the swelling slopes of the hill down to the river, which there takes a superb bend, and across it the eye runs on to distant towers, and masses of woods, and clumps of pine-clad hills high and dark. Near the house stands the picturesque parsonage, half covered with ivy, and here and there a cottage, and that is Cotmanhaye —there is no village. Opposite to the house

southward, or south-west, rises a still higher range of hills, and on climbing that, you behold another landscape, vast and varied, villages, farms, and woods.

Sir Emanuel Clavering is a tall gentlemanly man of sixty. All who know him declare him a man of very pleasant manners, extremely well read; fond of poetry, but of the Pope school, which he declares to be the only polished and correct one; and given to astronomical, and it is said abstruse studies. There is a small tower at some distance on the ridge of the hill, which he uses as an observatory. In his youth he was away, no one knows where, for a space of seven years. Those who have seen him often and inspected him closely, assert that the gristle of his nose is bored, as savages bore theirs to insert a feather or a flower. Hence, there is a popular story—an imagination, for Sir Emanuel has never been known to utter a word to his most intimate

friends, either of this curious fact, or of the sojourn of those years. The country people talk fluently by their firesides of Sir Emanuel in his wild youth as the head of some wild race, the lord of some dark-eyed, dark-skinned princess. They have romanced out a grand story of his leading the devoted natives to battle, with all the terrors of European arms, and winning great victories and domains for them. They account for his return by the death of his princess, a creature of wondrous beauty, and by the natural longings for one's native land. Not a syllable of this story has a basis of ascertained fact, not the ground of a single allusion the most distant; all those years are a blank to every one but Sir Emanuel himself. Nothing more is known than that he returned to find his father dead, and his younger brother, the rector, holding the estate for him. He had neither brother nor sister besides Thomas the rector. In a few years, during which he was about a great

deal in London, and from which gentlemen of his own tastes sometimes came down and shut themselves up for days with him in his tower, and were seen riding about with him, Sir Emanuel married. Not, however, one of the daughters of any of the neighbouring aristocratic families, but the daughter of the bailiff of his estate. His wife had still fewer relatives than himself, she had no brother or sister. She was a naturally fine woman, and bore her elevation with modesty and good sense. The habits of Sir Emanuel became more secluded than before. The neighbouring families rarely called on him. His life was chiefly spent in prosecuting the studies of his tower, in field sports, in fishing, and in occasional visits to the metropolis.

Such a character was sure to become the object of the most extraordinary rumours in the country round. His astronomical studies, his frequent walks at midnight to his solitary tower, followed by two large black dogs,

his being seen by the keepers sometimes wrapped in his cloak, silently pacing along that bleak and elevated ridge in darkness and in the wildest tempests, was enough to add in the popular mind, to his astronomy, other and darker studies. The peasantry universally believed that he dealt in the black art; they asserted that he had been seen at the same hour in two different places thirty miles apart; they said that there was nothing lost anywhere in the neighbourhood but he would say, immediately on hearing of it, where it was, or who had got it; and that he was always right. He always told the farmers what sort of a summer or winter it would be, which was certain to take place; and he had been known on hearing of a wedding, whether in high or low life, to shake his head and say that would not be lucky, and it never was. All these things he probably pronounced from the simple sources of natural sagacity and extended knowledge,

perfectly legitimate in its character; but the people far around took another and more mysterious view of it. They observed that though his brother was the clergyman, and the living belonging to the family, he rarely appeared at church; and the peasantry when they saw him felt a secret terror, though he always accosted them most kindly; was always cheerful, and even jocose, and never heard of a case of distress which he did not send to relieve.

Sir Emanuel, contrary to his wont, called on the Degges, and they returned his call, curious to make the acquaintance of a man of so peculiar a reputation. They were greatly struck with the polished friendliness of his manner, his frank cordiality, and his superior intelligence. He assured them that he had great pleasure in the prospect of cultivating their friendship. Lady Clavering had been deceased some years; he had but one son, Henry Clavering, who had been the

school-fellow of George Woodburn, at Repton, and who was on terms of great friendship with all the family at Woodburn Grange.

And thus I have presented a few of the leading *dramatis personæ;* others are waiting in the side-scenes ready to make their appearance.

CHAPTER V.

BETTY TRAPPS COMES TO NOTICE.

The life of Rockville, Woodburn, and their vicinities presented little to chronicle for some time. Simon Degge was angrily commented upon by the neighbouring squirearchy, for having thrown open the game on his estate to the farmers. "This is the way," they said at their mutual dinners, "with these plebeians. Having no taste for gentlemanly sport themselves, they would like to see it annihilated, and the landed proprietors reduced for amusement to flocking to Castleborough, and winding cotton-balls, or manufacturing stockings." This idea was very much applauded, and made the ladies of the county very merry. "We must all go to help

the gentlemen," they said, "and seam hose, and help to 'take in.'" Mr. Markham, the rector of Rockville, though agreeing with his landed friends in the main idea, said he was bound to say that Mr. Degge was rather a keen sportsman, and a prodigious good shot. He had seen him drop his birds right and left in a most masterly way; where he had picked up the skill rather puzzled him. Certainly, it could not come by nature, as Dogberry thought reading and writing did; but it must be admitted that he was a prodigiously clever man. And, in fact, unless he had been, how could he have got on so?

"How do good-looking fellows manage to marry rich heiresses?" asked Sir Benjamin Bullockshed.

"Ah, well; but that was not altogether the way that Mr. Degge had mounted into such fortune. No, no; it was too well known that he had got rich before he got the rich wife. *He* was not going to be the panegyrist of

Degge ; he did not approve of letting either farmers or hosiers loose on the game. By no means ; and, besides, Degge had no taste at all for coursing, nor for hunting."

"How should he?" asked Sir Thomas Tenterhook. "Probably, in his younger days he might manage to leap over a counter, but I should like to see him take a good hawthorn fence with a ditch on the other side, or a five-barred gate."

"But he could do it; nay, I have seen him do it," said Mr. Markham, "in riding over his farm one day ; and if he had hunted all his life, he could not have shown himself more at home in the saddle."

"Gad! Markham," said Sir Thomas, "but Degge has turned your head marvellously in a very little time. Why, you are a regular trumpeter for him. By your account he is possessed of all the graces and endowments of a specimen man."

"Oh! don't you believe it, Sir Thomas.

It is nonsense," replied Mr. Markham ; " it is useless to deny what is plain to everybody ; but I join you in all you say of Degge's vulgar impudence in presuming to snatch a property, as it were, out of the hands of such a gentleman as Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, and in letting loose half the hosiers of Castleborough on Sir Benjamin's game."

" On Sir Benjamin's game ! " said Sir Roger Rockville ; " on all our game. He has encouraged the poachers to an audacity never known before. They all say, 'There, Mr. Degge has shown his sense. He knows that game is everybody's.' Our keepers have now no rest day nor night. The fields, the woods, the copses swarm with poachers. After them, and they are over the hedges into Degge's land, and touch 'em there who dare. Sooner than we should convict them, he would give every man of them a keeper's licence. That arch scamp, Joe Scammell, I am told, sends cart-loads of hares and phea-

sants to Castleborough every week. Can no one lay hold of that fellow? His offences are now so many, he might be transported."

"But what matters half-a-dozen Scammells being sent out of the country," said Sir Thomas Tenterhook, "when every labourer or artizan is encouraged by the example of Degge, who is only a poacher on a larger scale? They preach that all must live. Now let me tell you something. Close to my estate, and by the high road to Castleborough, there lives a shoemaker, in a village, who was had up and fined for shooting a hare in his garden last winter but one. That fellow the very next season took out a licence, for the right ot a shot over his own garden, and he could not be turned out of it. So Degge made him one of his keepers, and thus qualified him; and all this last autumn and winter, he has sat at his window and shot my hares and pheasants. Not content with daylight, he has kept this fine game by moonlight. Gad!

the fellow is making a little fortune out of it."

There was a universal murmur of indignation at such an instance of unheard-of audacity.

"Yes," said Sir Benjamin Bullockshed, "that is precisely the case in point. My game is drained off by constantly getting into some one of Degge's fields, and being killed by one of his stocking-weaver acquaintances. I say, Mr. Markham, spite of your praises of Simon Degge, the man is a nuisance, a sheer, intolerable unmitigated nuisance."

"Hear! hear!" resounded round the dinner-table, in which Mr. Markham, rather alarmed for his reputation, joined; and the ladies rose, to retire to the drawing-room, expressing their hearty approbation.

Simon Degge, meantime, did not trouble himself about these wrathful comments upon him in the neighbouring great houses. He had the pleasure of hearing all throughout

Hillmartin, that the people there were highly pleased with the check he had given to Sir Benjamin Bullocksheed, whose injustice to the farmers of this farm had been a subject of indignant comment for years. As his crops grew, he fenced off what he wanted to secure from the game, with a wire fencing, which he found perfectly effectual, leaving a considerable strip along the wood-sides to the depredations of these creatures. When the harvest was got, he removed his wire-fence, and allowed the game to wander anywhere, and all autumn and winter he found an abundant supply for himself and friends, who had thus a great inducement to come out from Castleborough for a good day's shooting every now and then. This was not less irritating to the Bullocksheeds and Rockvilles, than it was delightful to the people and farmers all round, who not daring to open their mouths, yet saw with evident satisfaction this poetical justice executed on men who had never shown the

least sense of justice in their own conduct whenever game was concerned.

The objects of social improvement which interested Mr. and Mrs. Degge in Castleborough, were introduced by them into the little arena of Hillmartin. The condition of the poor was looked into, and their distresses relieved. Their children were afforded a good school, and many a comfort flowed unostentatiously into the homes of the aged or the sick that was never known before.

Thus a new link was established between town and country, which, though it did not extend to the Bullocksheds and Rockvilles, did extend to the Woodburns, the Claverings, and some other county families. By the intercourse of the Degges, the Woodburns, the Heritages, and the Claverings, Sir Emanuel and his brother Thomas, the rector of Cotmanhaye, his wife and son, a very charming little circle was formed, in which English country life presented its most genial aspect.

After a few formal visits and dinings, Mr. and Mrs. Degge began by degrees, one or other of them, or both together, to drop in at Woodburn Grange unceremoniously, and the Woodburns at Hillmartin. Simon Degge was glad to have something regarding his farm or country concerns to ask Mr. Woodburn about, and to take a ride with Leonard Woodburn when he went to superintend his own farm. Sometimes they extended their ride to Cotmanhaye Manor, and had a chat with Sir Emanuel, or, if he were absent, with the rector, who was a zealous farmer himself, and rented a large farm of his brother, on which his only son, Charles, resided, a couple of miles off. They always found Sir Emanuel extremely affable and even jocosely kind, and always familiar with all the topics of the day, whether political or concerning the affairs of the country round. His peeps into the worlds of the heavens did not seem to render him in the least indifferent to or unobservant of what

passed in this. He never obtruded the display of his extensive knowlege of foreign countries, or of men and things in the great world of London and the nation at large, but these were frequently showing themselves in incidental remarks on the topics under discussion. Frequently he ordered his horse and accompanied them in their ride, and during the winter he invited them to join him in snipe and woodcock shooting, these birds abounding in some swampy places on his property, as did wild geese and ducks about the reedy backwaterings of the river. On these occasions he not only showed himself a dead shot, but careless of weather and capable of enduring amazing exertion.

The festivities of the winter brought these families much together. Woodburn Grange presented all the genial and gay abundance of fare—fat turkeys and geese, mince-pies, pork-pies, possets, and a world of light delicacies, blazing fires, and country sports and

dances, even blind-man's-buff, turn-trencher, and other romps, which had been preserved at the Grange from father to son as essential customs of country-life. These had a novelty, and, therefore, a greater charm for the young people from the town, than the more ordinary dinner-parties and dances of the great halls. Even Sir Emanuel Clavering became a laughing boy again at the rural revels of the Grange, and vied with the lightsome, butterfly gaiety of Letty, amid these domestic saturnalia. Sir Emanuel even opened his house to several gay parties, and embellished his handsome suite of rooms with a display of arms of richest and quaintest workmanship, caskets of ivory of most delicate carvings, and others inlaid with jewels and gold, with silken draperies of richest colours and strange devices, and china jars and vessels, some of stupendous size, and most superb forms, and painted enamelings. He himself moved everywhere amongst his guests, as affable,

kind, gracefully courteous and cordial, as if he, too, never studied anything but to enjoy his fortune and position as a finished gentleman. Except his brother and his brother's wife, he was now alone in his house, for his son was and had been some time abroad. All were charmed with Sir Emanuel, and wondered that he had spent so secluded a life in the country. Perhaps the cause was not far to seek, when it was recollected that Sir Roger Rockville, the Bullocksheds, and Tenterhooks had been his chief neighbours.

As the winter passed, and the spring days grew in warmth and pleasantness, the intercourse of these families grew too. Mr. and Mrs. Degge would call and join the young people of the Grange in their walks or rides, and Mrs. Degge would drop in and have a pleasant chat with Mrs. Woodburn, Ann, and Letty, as they went on with their different concerns. The great concern of Letty, indeed, seeming to be to laugh and

chatter, as if there were no such things as care or matter-of-fact duty in the world. She had to show Mrs. Degge the herds of young ducks and chickens, the birds' nests in curious places in the garden, the dogs, and the rabbits kept in the hutches, as if she had been an actual boy, and to the evident delight of their visitor, while a flood of intervening small-talk produced bursts of merry laughter, which, reaching the house, made the graver mother exclaim, "What *can* that girl be about?"

A great variety in this little circle was furnished by the Friends' family of the Heritages. It was not the custom of these worthy Friends to give festive parties, nor did they frequent those of their neighbours, if there was to be much worldly amusement, especially of dancing, cards, or the like. They preferred to make familiar calls during the day, on which occasions they were always extremely friendly, and as pleasantly cheerful as any

people in the world, but always with a certain substratum of gravity and soberness. These visits were generally made by Mrs. Heritage and her daughter Millicent. The mother was sure to ask about what she saw going on in farming household affairs. In winter she was very much interested in Betty Trapps's spinning-wheel, which, when she had nothing else very pressing, was sure to be humming away in the warm, clean house-place, as it was called, a sort of intermediate room between the kitchen and the parlour, where the farmmen and the servants took their meals, and where Mr. Woodburn furnished them with suitable books for their evening's reading in winter, but where the men generally stretched their legs before the blazing fire, and dropped asleep, and then stole off to bed. Betty Trapps greatly amused the Heritage ladies, mother and daughter, with her country shrewdness and plain-spokenness.

"Dost thou manage to get good tow?" asked Mrs. Heritage, one day.

"Oh, yes," Betty said, "as good as I expect."

"Dost thou not expect it to be good, then?" asked Mrs. Heritage.

"Yes, *I* expect it," said Betty, "because I look pretty sharp after it. They wunna readily find a norp* in me."

"Surely," said Mrs. Heritage, "there cannot be much cheating in tow?"

"There are tricks in all trades," said Betty, dryly, "and there are tricks in tow. I get mine from Widow Pechell, in Hillmartin, and as I scrutinised it pretty closely when I first went to her shop, says Mrs. Pechell, 'Ay, thou may look, lass, but nobody is ever deceived in *my* tow, for they awlis expect a bit of bad in the middle, and they are sure to find it there.'"

* An ape; used now by the country people for a simpleton.

"That was candid," said Miss Millicent Heritage, laughing gently.

"But didst thou find some bad in the middle?" asked Mrs. Heritage.

"Yes, sure enough I did," said Betty; "but I just took it out of the rock, and laid it on the counter, and said, 'Now, weigh it, missis,' and since then I never find any bad in the middle, because Mother Pechell knows it's just no use. She may try that on with norps."

"Well," said Mrs. Heritage, rising, "when I want to buy tow, Betty, I will get thee to to do it for me."

Betty turned her wheel more briskly at this compliment to her sagacity, and added, "You might do worse, Mrs. Heritage; and yet I think Sukey Priddo can help you in such bargains quite as well." Sukey Priddo was Mrs. Heritage's housekeeper, and a sister Methodist of Betty's.

"Oh! Sukey Priddo is a good, careful,

managing soul," said Mrs. Heritage, turning round and smiling as she went out; "but not half so sharp as thee, I think. Farewell, Betty."

The Heritages, though they rarely gave parties, were always glad to see any of their friends at tea at five o'clock, and after that, in summer, to a walk in the grounds, and supper at eight, soon after which they liked their friends to depart, as they had family reading at nine, and all the house in bed at ten. It was a hospitable, abundant house. No good things of life were ever wanting there, for though the Friends have always been a temperate people, and have had a horror of drunkenness as actually degrading, they have always maintained luxurious tables —a luxury wedded to moderate indulgence —and have, combined with their avoidance of agitative passions, the great and healthy longevity they display.

At the simple but plenteous board of Fair

Manor, our friends of Woodburn and even of Cotmanhaye—for Sir Emanuel had gradually been drawn out to occasional visits as far as there, and seemed as if he could not sufficiently admire the grave wisdom of Mr. Heritage, and the oriental beauty of the fair Millicent—have met quite another class and circle of persons. These were inhabitants of Castleborough, chiefly Friends, and their habits of thought, speech, and opinion, were a curious study to the more general denizens of the every-day world. There was a tone of what might be called practical and moral economy about them. Their plain dresses and simple manners were accompanied by a mode of looking at everything so different from that of the world—even the religious world in general—as made it rather a piquant study to those not intimate with them. Having abandoned all the usual amusements of society, as vain, frivolous, and often very immoral, and, therefore, unbecoming true

Christians,—hunting, racing, theatres, balls, concerts, cards, and other games of hazard, or of skill employed for gain,—even abstaining from music, singing, or other things which might lead to lightness and dissipation, they were thrown greatly upon trade for a resource against *ennui* almost as much as for profit. In the domestic life, books of the most moral and grave kind, and the discussion of the great topics of philanthropy, of opposition to war, slavery, and political religions, and plans for prison discipline, and the relief of distress, and the spread of education amongst the people : these were their favourite topics ; but of these their conversation was of the simplest kind. There was often a childlike character about it. In all great moral points they were simple, direct, substantial, and without grace or ornament,—grand. Brave and able must have been the man who could compete with them on any of these heads, for they were on the rock of

eternal truth, and no human force could push them from it. Outside of this they could find amusement in the most simple of simplicities. You might see them at the tea-table at Fair Manor amuse themselves—that is, the young people, the elder ones looking on—with endeavouring to lift, by a close application of fingers and thumb to their smooth backs, the small dessert or tea-table plates which they used; or riddles and sober conundrums, could maintain a very innocent mirth for a whole evening.

There were, however, a number of curious, and one or two remarkable characters amongst the kind visitors from Castleborough, whom we shall occasionally meet there. Not the least striking figures in these parties, however, were David and Dorothy Qualm, and Sylvanus Crook. These were part and parcel, as it were, of the Fair Manor circle. David Qualm, as I have said, was the brother-in-law of Joseph Heritage, Dorothy Qualm being

Jasper's sister. This worthy couple lived, as we have said, at Still Lodge, just outside the grounds of Fair Manor. Still Lodge!—a most appropriate name. The very element of David and Dorothy Qualm was silence. So far as could be observed, they managed to understand and communicate with each other at the least expense of words conceivable. Their movements were as quiet as their words. What they did, said, thought of, what was their specialty, no one had ever been able to discover. And yet their specialty was huge, prominent, unavoidable—it was quietude. No passion, except it were a passion for peaceful inertia, marked, much less disturbed, their days. Their house was small and modest, but always exquisitely neat. It seemed a sin to tread on those bright, nice, unfaded, unworn carpets. On the mat at the entrance-door you read the large-lettered admonition, "Please, wipe thy shoes." The garden was always neatness itself—staid and

tempered in the very colours of its flowers. Dorothy Qualm had once been seen ordering the gardener to dig up and throw out some gorgeously red peonies, as too un-Friendly and gaudy in hue. David Qualm never was seen to garden, to engage in anything active, or visible even, except in tranquilly smoking his pipe, and in riding out on a small, stout Welsh pony, called Taffy, by the side of his tall, portly brother-in-law, Jasper Heritage, who rode, as befitted him, a large black horse. The high and substantial apparition of Jasper Heritage, and the little figure of pony and rider inevitably at his side, were familiar objects around Woodburn. Their striking difference in bulk and stature had inspired some wag to name them David and Goliath. Once Sylvanus Crook was greatly scandalised by finding chalked on the wall of the entrance-lodge where he lived, as he went out early one summer morning,—

David was a little man,
Goliath he was tall,
And you may see them any day
At Fair Manor Hall.

Sylvanus hurried in for a sponge and bucket of water, and perhaps never showed more adroitness in his life than in wiping out the offensive rhyme before his wife could get a glimpse of it. But many an earlier riser than Sylvanus had already read it, and it had entered into the oral curiosities of Woodburn, and even travelled to Castleborough.

In company David Qualm preserved the same solid reticence, the same inexhaustible capacity for silence as in his own domicile. At home, his pipe was his constant companion even more inseparable than his equally quiescent wife. What was he? He was the companion of Jasper Heritage, and that was all, so far as the most inquisitive mortal ever knew. Did he and brother Jasper ever converse at home, or in their rides? No one lives to tell us. Probably, in their own

phrase, they were brought into nearness with each other, as Oliver the Protector said to George Fox at Whitehall, "Come again, George, come often; for if thou and I were oftener together, we should be nearer to each other." David Qualm, in his brown Quaker suit, with his brown wig and his cocked hat, with the ample brim suspended by silk cords in the most orthodox style of that day of Quakerism, was a figure to be carved in stone, for no stone could surpass him in the abundance and perpetuity of silence.

Sylvanus Crook, the lodge inhabiter—his wife was the gate-keeper—Sylvanus, the overlooker of the grounds and gardeners, the house-steward, the purveyor of all necessaries, and bearer of all important messages—in a word, the factotum of Fair Manor—was a middle-sized man of forty, of light build, and clad in light drab, with short knee-breeches and grey ribbed stockings. His hat, too, was three-cocked, but had a less precise

and more weather-beaten air than that of David Qualm, but was generally believed to be David's, which in due course had descended on Sylvanus. In mind, in manner, in all else, Sylvanus, however, was the antithesis of David. Sylvanus had talk enough and busy mind enough for anybody. He read—having the run of Mr. Heritage's library, but foraged most amongst Friends' books : the histories of their trials, persecutions, and the expositions of their opinions. Sylvanus was a sturdy champion of Quaker principles and customs, and skilful must the polemical acrobat be who ventured a wrestle with him on that familiar and sacred ground. Many a combat had Sylvanus and Betty Trapps on the comparative merits of Quakerism and Methodism, and on sundry topics besides. Betty often turned the laugh against Sylvanus, but he was like a true Englishman, as described by Napoleon—he never knew when he was beaten. Sylvanus was the indispen-

sable man at Fair Manor, and was one of those who, though servants, are acknowledged as brothers, and was admitted frequently to the society which frequented that great resort of Castleborough Friends.

CHAPTER VI.

THORSBY AMONGST THE WOODBURNS.

Amongst the Castleborough gentlemen who were on terms of intimacy with the family of Simon Degge, and who, therefore, frequently was to be met at Hillmartin, was a Mr. Henry Thorsby. This Mr. Thorsby was a young man of one of the oldest and most leading families of Castleborough. He was a manufacturing hosier; hosiery being one of the two great staples of the town—the other being lace. These hosiers employed a great number of frame-work-knitters in both town and country. These people, in fact, hand-loom-weavers, worked in the stocking-frame, receiving the cotton from the hosier, and bringing in to the town-warehouse their woven stockings at so much per dozen every

Saturday. A first-rate house, therefore, employed some hundreds of men or women, as it might be, for both men and women are stocking-weavers, or, as they are termed, stockingers.

Mr. Henry, or as he was more commonly called, Harry Thorsby, was the son of a great hosier, who had led a very free and *bon vivant* life; had been a fearful sufferer from the gout; and had died recently from an attack of it which had been driven to the stomach. He had left only his widow and this one son, who was regarded as one of the most substantial burghers of the place. He had large warehouses, a large and handsome house, in which his mother presided, and to whom he was the apple of her eye. In her eyes her son Harry was one in a thousand; never was such a handsome, good-hearted fellow; he was, she said, as good as twenty daughters to her, and always had been.

In fact, Harry Thorsby was a very good-

looking and pleasant young man. He was something above the middle height, rather broadly built, but extremely active. He had a handsome, somewhat large face, of what is called the oval contour, well-defined features, a bushy head of black hair, a rather dark complexion, and well-shaped black whiskers. Thorsby, like his father, had a very sociable and rather jovial turn—that was the rock in his path. His mother, indeed, had often with tears shown him that danger, and implored him to take warning by his father's example, who had shortened his life by indulgence in wine, and what he called good company; and who might have possessed double the wealth, and the first place in the town,—yes, not even second to Mr. Simon Degge,—had he avoided the snare of good fellowship. Harry would not hurt his mother's feelings for the world, and he always said,—"Oh, mother, you need not have any anxiety on my account. I am not by any

means fond of wine, though I do like a little pleasant company; but I shall not forget what I have seen, and I shall not forget you, mother."

Harry Thorsby was fond of his horse, and followed the hunt. He might often be seen during the season, in his scarlet coat riding out of town on a fine morning to the meet of the day, looking very gallant and happy; and grave fellow-manufacturers as they passed to their warehouses, while they nodded and smiled in passing, said to themselves,—"Thorsby will be Thorsby; what is bred in the bone will never be out of the flesh. Harry, like his father, finds something pleasanter than his counting-house."

But, exclusive of this taste for hunting, and for shooting, which was equally a passion of his, Harry Thorsby was a good tradesman, and a steady attendant on his counting-house and warehouse and business altogether. Business over, however, he was much in the

company of the young men of position in the town. He was an extremely merry, amusing fellow in company; told an anecdote well, and sung fairly. His nature seemed to demand life and variety. He was extremely excitable, but not to anger,—for he was extremely forbearing under provocation; his tendency was to pleasure, fun—what is termed larking—and to all the jollity of youth.

One of these larks he often was very merry over amongst his intimate friends. He and his mother often breakfasted at a small round table, and the breakfast was brought in on a circular-turned mahogany tray, which had grown rather rotund at the bottom so that it would easily turn round on the table. His mother being very fond of a gossip, and having always a great deal to tell him in his *tête-à-tête*, had scarcely began her coffee when Harry had despatched his first cup; unperceived, therefore, he would gently turn the tray round, finish her cup too, and

then remind her that both were empty. This process went on to the end of Harry's three cups, when he would spring up and say he must be off to business. "I hope you've made a good breakfast, Harry," his mother would say, rising at the same time; "as for me, I don't know how it is, but I feel neither fuller nor fatter."

Harry went laughing slily to himself away, saying, "Well, mother, you have been amusing me with your talk so much, you don't know whether you have breakfasted or not. Get some more. You're never wrong if you eat till you are satisfied." And the old lady would say, "Well, my lad, I think I must, for I feel quite sinking." And he would leave her wondering how it was, but pouring comfortably out another cup.

Another manœuvre was not quite so innocent. Being sent, as a boy, on his father's Arab mare, on a disagreeable journey, he dismounted outside of the town, daubed the

poor mare's face and knees with mud, and led her back home, saying that she had fallen and thrown him, and hurt him so much, that he could not go. His clothes being smeared plentifully, too, added to the probability of the story. But if Harry had any feeling, he was severely punished for his ruse, for his father, in a great rage, took the riding-whip and gave the innocent mare, who never made a false step in her life, a most unmerciful beating, and soon after sold her. This fact had reached Betty Trapps through Sylvanus Crook, and she prognosticated something awful of so cruelly artful a lad. Cruelty, however, was far from one of Harry Thorsby's sins of manhood. He showed often very humane feeling.

Thorsby was frequently at Hillmartin; and there was a belief that he aspired to the hand of a rich Miss Mountain, of Castleborough. However that might be, he soon had occasion to accompany Ann and Letty

home one evening, and from that day was as frequent and familiar a visitor at the Grange. George Woodburn had seen something of him at different times in Castleborough and in the hunting-field, and there soon grew up a great friendship. They made appointments to go to the hunt together. George invited him to come and shoot with him; for, besides the game on Woodburn Farm, Sir Emanuel Clavering had given George free range on his lands; and in a while Thorsby was on the most familiar terms at the Grange. Everybody liked him. He was so intelligent and so full of the spirit of good nature and of life enjoyment. He often came and passed the night there, that he might talk with Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn, and sing a variety of popular airs with Letty, which Ann accompanied on the piano.

George Woodburn was a young man of very pleasing person, but considered, by young men in general, peculiar. He had

been educated at Repton, the great Derbyshire grammar school, where he had made the acquaintance of the sons of the principal nobles and gentry of the county. Henry Clavering, the son of Sir Emanuel, their near neighbour, had been one of his schoolfellows, and they had ever since been great friends. They had enjoyed together all the pleasures and sports of country life. Clavering was now away, and Thorsby was a very acceptable companion for George. It was in the country and at home, however, that this companionship was enjoyed, for George could never be persuaded to join Thorsby's social circles in town. George had a steadfast dislike of towns and great companies. From a boy there had been a certain gravity in his character, combined with the utmost kindliness of disposition. He loved above everything the country and country life. His heart and soul were in his profession of agriculturist. In everything connected with farming

and with the objects of nature lay his whole happiness. He knew every creature, great and small, that inhabited the fields; their haunts and habits were as familiar to him as the doings in his own family. Every species of insect was known to him, and might be said to be loved by him. As a boy he could tell you not only of every bird that built in the hedges, the orchard-trees, the cart-sheds, and the eaves, but the mason-bees that built in the old garden-wall he could show you passing in and out, and name them by names of his own, knowing every one individually.

He had from a mere lad accustomed himself to exposure to all kinds of weather, hot or cold, to battle with the wildest snows in looking after the sheep, to the most drenching rains, following the plough, or carting out compost for the land. There was no kind of manual labour on the farm in which he was not as expert as any labourer or farm-servant of them all. No one could beat him in mow-

ing, reaping, ploughing, threshing, or in any kind of work. He could plash a hedge, cut a ditch or a drain, or fell a tree with any of them. His strength was prodigious, from constant exercise, and from absence of any enfeebling indulgence, for he had an innate aversion to much wine or beer, preferring what he called the mother and staple of all drinks—the crystal daughter of the rock.

In these respects George Woodburn was a most beneficial companion for Harry Thorsby, for George's unequivocal dislike of anything dissipated, his equally unmistakeable enjoyment of the simplest pleasures of the country, struck Thorsby with wonder; and when he saw George's real pleasure in the moderate number of friends that he mixed with, and his enormous capacity for enduring exertion, he wondered the more. In their shooting excursions he would have tired down a horse, and never appeared to know what fatigue was in himself.

"George," said Thorsby, "how I do envy you your philosophical contempt for the pleasures of gay society, for you seem to enjoy what you do like with such a genuine gusto."

"But it is no merit, my dear fellow," George would reply; "for all those things that you call jollities and gaieties are my aversion. To spring out of bed on a summer's morning, and see the sun shining over the beauteous landscape, steaming and smoking in the ascending dew; to hear the cuckoo calling me in her quaint foreign tongue, the thrushes and blackbirds shouting out their delight, some scores of them, as if they had not hearts big enough for their joy; to hear all the varied sounds of life, from the larks in the sky, from the creatures in the yard; to see the cattle and the flocks all luxuriating in the green or golden fields; to hear human voices making up the concert of nature, and, above all, the merry tongue of Letty, and the grave, loving tones of Ann, already out in

the garden; to mount my horse, and ride away through fields and woods amid all the gladness of heaven and earth; to feel the fulness of life beating in my veins and gushing through my heart—Ah! what are all your simpering fine people, and your candle-light companies to me! Thorsby, I see men solitarily passing their lives in the lonely fields, or felling and fagoting in the lonely woods, whose very existence will never be known beyond their own hamlet; and do you think they are miserable? I tell you, no—so long as they can earn a decent reward for their labour. I often talk with these men, the Crusoes of the fields, of whom you fine people never think, or value them more than the sheep which graze beside them, and I find that God has breathed into them, frequently, in His silent language, of the sun, the moon, and stars, of the whispering breezes of evening, the colours of the sky, and the odours of turf and forest—things the haunters of crowds

and lamplit festivities never dream of. These humble creatures, amid all their ignorance, in all their unvalued life, go home at night to loving hearts, and taste a happiness in communion with a few loved objects, which never can come to those whose affections are dissipated by running over countless forms and faces without settling on any. I would rather be one of these poor, despised, unknown, uncared-for creatures than the finest, wealthiest man or woman who lives the mere life of fashion and conventionalism.

"Our philosophical poet Wordsworth has exactly hit my idea of the philosophy of existence :—

" ' Yet life, you say, is life; we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee,
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe.
Even be it so: yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world's true worldlings, rank not me.

* * * * *

" Nor can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine: for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancour never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons; hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous
thought.' "

Had George Woodburn been an austere or moping sort of young man, such conversations as these would not have surprised Harry Thorsby; but when he saw, that in everything George Woodburn found a pleasure as fresh as a mountain spring, that he was at home in the evening, all fun and playfulness, with his sisters, listened with delight to their music and singing, though he took no share in these things himself; with what sound sense and early wisdom he entered into the conversation with his parents and friends on any topic of domestic or public concern, he was deeply struck by it, and entertained a profound respect and esteem for so uncommon a specimen of modern youth.

There was one person, however, in the

Woodburn Grange family, who looked on the introduction of Harry Thorsby on so familiar a footing as a real misfortune, and that was Betty Trapps. From the first moment of his entering the house, she regarded him with a cold and unwelcome eye. "Well," said she, when asked whether she did not think him a very pleasant man, "he is not one of my men. I say, if I must speak my mind, dunna put much faith in him. Beware, I say, beware of cockatrices."

"Oh, Betty!" exclaimed the stern Ann, "how can you be so uncharitable? Mr. Thorsby is a most respectable gentleman, known to be so to all Castleborough. Surely a friend of the Degges and of the Heritages cannot be a very bad man."

"I did not say he was a bad man," said Betty. "I only said he wasna one of my sort."

"Why no," said Letty, indignantly, "he is not a Methodist; but for all that, it does

not follow that he is a cockatrice. What do you mean by cockatrices ?"

"Ah! Miss Letty, beware! beware!" said Betty, looking very serious. "I say not to your young fluttering heart more, nor to any one else. I see a great candle and a little, pretty, very pretty moth, a-flying round it. If it burns its wings, then it won't be the fault of Betty Trapps."

Letty laughed outright. "Why, Betty, you are growing prophetic ; but what about the cockatrices ? I have often heard of such nondescripts, but I never saw one yet."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Betty. "If you have not I wish you never may. But as to this Thorsby, he crows when he laughs. He crows and chuckles, and shakes those black locks of his. Oh ! he is too full of wild fire by half. See if it dunna run clean away with him one of these days.

"'A crowing hen and crowing men,
Twist off their heads and sleep again.'"

"Betty!" said Ann, "what do you mean with your superstitious rhymes? Would you twist off Mr. Thorsby's head?"

"Oh no!" said Betty. "I would not twist off his head; I'd only turn it hind before, that when he thought he was coming here he might be going somewhere else. I would not trust him or his head. I only mean that crowing hens and crowing men are out of natur. There's no sureness of 'em. Mark! I don't say there's any guillery in this young man; but he's no stop in him."

"Well," said the young ladies, "we hope you and Mr. Thorsby will become better friends as you get to know one another better. He thinks very much of you, Betty."

Betty shook her head. "I've said my say," she rejoined. "What must be, must be. It's none of my doings nor shapings. Pray God all come out right."

Thorsby was always very affable and very pleasantly jocose with Betty. Of course, he was not apprised of her unfavourable idea of him; but he saw that she did not willingly converse with him, but then he knew that she was reckoned an oddity, and he thought it her way. As time went on Betty seemed to soften down a little. He frequently offered her money when he had been staying there; but she would never take it. "It is for the trouble I give it you, Betty," said Thorsby.

"You give me no trouble," answered Betty. "I have just the same to cook and to do whether you are here or aren't here. You can give it to Thomasin"—the other maid.

Thorsby found the very way to call Betty out was to give her a little wipe about Methodism, when she was sure to take up cudgels, as she called it, on that point; but this did not seem to raise Mr. Thorsby in her favour.

As time went on the intimacy of this little circle of families increased. Sometimes Sir

Emanuel rode up to the Grange, and after chatting for an hour with the ladies, and walking with them round their garden, noticing their trees and young broods of different feathered stock, and telling them an anecdote of his foreign sojourns, and then carrying off the ever-ready Letty for a ride, and picking up, perhaps, Miss Heritage by the way, he would invite a number of them, and their parents, brothers, and sisters, to come up and spend an evening, and see the wonders of the heavens through his great telescope in the tower. Advancing spring and summer drew the young people out to rides and walks through the fields and woods, and to boat sails on the river. Summer made all busy at the Grange: the swarming of bees, the making of cheese and butter, the labourers all engaged in weeding the green corn, and coming in in troops for plentiful dinners and suppers, kept Betty Trapps in constant action, and in nimble bandying of

country wit with these workpeople. Betty sat at table and carved for them, and dealt out sly hits to one or another as she dealt out plates well-heaped with boiled beef or bacon, and plenty of broad beans, cabbage, and other vegetables. There was often more genuine wit and humour circulating amongst these sons of the soil than illumines the boards of very great men.

"Ah! you there, Joe Clay," cried Betty, "let me give you some more greens."

"O! no more greens, thank you," said Joe ruefully, "but a little more cabbage if you please, Betty."

There was a loud burst of laughter, which the uninitiated would not have seen the gist of; but Joe Clay had married a Green, who led him anything but a green life. Not even Xantippe could have cut gibes with her.

"How's your wife's mother, Nathan Hopcroft?"

Nathan Hopcroft, a stupid-looking fellow,

shakes his head. "Th' owd ooman's stark dead, Missis; and I canna bury her; an' I mun ha' it done."

"Good rest to her," said Betty, "she had long ceased to know much of this world—and, Nathan, if you canna bury her, you know where to go."

"Where?"

"To the club."

"Ay, I've been there, an' said I mun ha' it done, but they said, 'No, the coffer were empty; I was very able to do't mysen,' an' I ar'n't. Th' pigs hanna done well this year, and ar Jack's rabbits has been stown—nothing but ill luck. Nay, they wanted me to pay th' doctor's bill."

"What doctor had you?"

"Owd Doctor Drawatter."

"What! him with th' pigtail and powdered head," said Betty, "and that fine gold-headed cane, and that smooth finiking voice? My gracious! that such a fine

powdery peacock sort of a doctor should come to you, Nathan."

"Ay, and what do you think he said? When I told him poor folks couldna pay doctors' bills—they had enough to do to get bread—he says, 'Pooh, pooh, man! the poor are the best off of any people; they've got no dignity to support, like gentlemen, and gentlemen doctors.'"

"There's something in that, though," said Betty, "though you laugh at it."

"Ay," said another man, "if they would na plague us wi' lawyers and doctors, we might do. There's Lawyer Metthard been selling up poor Judy Selston for rent, poor old soul, and now she must end her days i' th' workhouse."

"Oh, drat that Lawyer Metthard," said Betty. "He should be called Meteasy, for he's only too easy to meet, and not so easy to get away from."

Betty's sally was warmly applauded, and

was sure to be reported all over the parish. "But, Betty," says another, "pr'ythee give me just a spoonful more beer."

Betty, who was an English female Eulenspiegel, though she never had heard of him even in his English name of Owlinglass, and often amused herself by taking people literally at their word, took up a table-spoon, filled it with beer, and handed it to the astonished labourer.

"Nay, Missis," he said, "I did not mean to be so very exact."

"Why, then, don't people say what they do mean?" asked Betty, gravely; "how is one to know?"

The laugh went round at the man's expense; and Betty suddenly calls out to a humorous-looking little man in a soldier's old red jacket, at the bottom of the table,—

"Well, Tom Boddily, so you are out of the House of Correction again, I see."

"Yes, Missis," says Tom, who had been shut up a few months for making free with Sir Benjamin Bullockshed's hares. "Yes, Missis, and who should I meet as I was coming home that very day, but Sir Benjamin's own self. It was on the Furze Bank, where I had snickled my hares. 'So Tom,' says he, 'you are abroad again, eh? I hope you have learned, however, now to know your own.' 'Oh yes! your worship,' says I, 'and a little of other folks's.' 'Ah! thou hast learned too much by half,' Sir Benjamin said, says he, and rode on, but suddenly turning round, 'Eh! Boddily! here's a gate thrown off the hooks. Can you tell me who's done that?' 'Yes, your worship,' said I, and he looked all alive to know. 'Yes,' said I, 'I can tell your worship. As Sir Roger Rockville says, —" It's either Bill Newton, or Jack Shelton, or somebody else."' The squire asked no more questions; but before he could get out of ear-shot, I said, 'Thank your worship for

sending me to the Stone Jug for three months; there's better keep there nor at home. I don't know how I shall ever make you amends, unless I come and dine with your worship some day.' 'Dine with the devil!' he exclaimed, turning as red as Farmer Winterwheat's new-painted barn-door, and digging his spurs into his innocent horse—wishing, I reckon, as it had bin me."

With this anecdote of Tom Boddily's, the whole rustic company rose, with a great scraping of feet and scrawling of wooden chairs on the brick floor; and sallied forth with much laughter and approbation of Tom's *tu-quoque*.

The summer was now in its glory. The elder-flower scented the breeze, the pink wild rose waved in long sprays from the hawthorn hedges. The breeze fanned deliciously the hot brown cheek of the milkmaid, as she sang over her milking-pail in the

golden-flowered croft. The lark sung her lustiest and clearest strains over the heads of mowers and haymakers at the Grange farm.

It was busy time at the Grange in the hay-season. Besides several fields of mowing-grass on his farm on this side of the river, Mr. Woodburn had a great extent of hay-meadow on the other side. This hay they got up and stacked in the field, and it was sold thence to Castleborough. Mr. Woodburn and George were every day busy with the work-people there till it was done. They had access to these great meadows by a primitive sort of ferry over the Trent, just below the Grange, to which a winding hollow lane, betwixt high banks and hedges, led. The boat, or rather punt, was capable of taking a horse, but not a cart over: carts and wagons they had to take over at the bridge, lower down the river. Anyone could pass himself over at this punt, by pulling at a chain which stretched across the river, and

was secured at each end to a post with a pulley. The ferry was known by the name of "Wink's Ferry," from a man who once lived in a cottage near.

When the haymaking was transferred to the home fields, everybody in the family took an interest in it. Letty took a part, and joined George and Betty Trapps in tossing about the grass, and making a sport of haymaking. Wherever she was, there was plenty of talk and laughter; and George, who directed the operations of the workpeople, often saluted her with a shower of hay, from his fork, over her head, telling her that she would never earn salt to her porridge at haymaking; whereupon Letty would appeal to Betty Trapps, whether she did not work famously, and Betty said, "Why, Miss Letty, your laughter is worth a day's work. I'm sure it makes me feel young again."

Ann would come out, too, and lend a hand soberly, but soon tiring of it and sitting

down with her mother, who brought out her knitting, and sate under a shady tree, enjoying the scene. Mr. Woodburn was leisurely at work, too ; stopping, every now and then, to lean on his rake or fork, and wipe his brow, and calling to his wife and the girls to come and look at a mouse-nest, with a number of sleek young ones all in motion, or to share the honey of some little colony of humble-bees, clustered up in its brown cells not unlike a round bunch of grapes.

The last day of haymaking was always a sort of haymaking fête at Woodburn Grange. A tent was pitched under a huge-spreading oak-tree, in a pretty hilly field opposite to the house. A number of young people of the neighbourhood were invited to dine in the tent in rural fashion, and also to take tea, if the weather was warm, on the grass in front. On this occasion there appeared on the ground, Miss Millicent Heritage, under the guardianship of her mother ; and Sylvanus

Crook drove them thither, and was to assist at the haymaking, which he liked. With them came also a new acquaintance, at least to the Woodburns; for he was an old friend of the Heritages. This was a fair, amiable-looking young man, who bore, however, the learned title of Dr. Frank Leroy, and whom they had all heard of as a young Quaker physician of Castleborough, who had a very great reputation for talent, and for skill in his profession, having obtained diplomas, with testimonials of the highest kind, from two or three English as well as from foreign schools of medicine. Any one looking at him at that time of day wondered where the signs of Quakerdom were, for he dressed and spoke like any other gentleman. There was nothing, either, very learned or formidable in his appearance. He was courteous, agreeable in his manners, and, as a stranger, somewhat retiring. He soon, however, became animated on joining the other young people, seized a fork,

and set manfully to work; and the group, full of merriment and sport, were soon reinforced by Harry Thorsby, overflowing with life and frolic. Our company being collected, we will take a closer view of the rural gathering in another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAY-FIELD FÊTE.

Scarcely were the young amateur hay-makers, who, by-the-by, were furnished with light forks and rakes suited to such delicate hands as those of the ladies—scarcely were all engaged in raking and throwing up the hay into wainrow under the generalship of George Woodburn, with much mutual merriment over one another's awkwardness, and over Thorsby's mercurial capers and flourishes—when a novel sight arrested their attention, and brought them all to a full stand. It was a long procession of the labourers, each carrying a dish, and marshalled and watched over by Betty Trapps. The men had finished their own dinners in

the house, and were now, on the return to the field, made the bearers of the viands for the gentry. Clumsy as such Ganymedes might be supposed, they had in their time been often employed to carry eggs and young lambs, as well as most of them babies, and they executed their task without a single stumble; and soon, according to custom, a horn was sonorously blown at the tent-door to call the party to dinner. All came trooping in free array, like a happy flock of pigeons dropping down to their barley at the barn-door. There were no leadings-in of ladies, but all came laughing and chatting amongst each other, and found an excellent dinner awaiting them. I shall not chronicle the courses; my readers can imagine all sorts of delicacies, to which the merry troop, seating themselves without any regard to precedence, seemed ready to do ample justice. Somehow, however, Dr. Leroy happened to find his seat at the elbow of Miss Millicent

Heritage, beaming with radiance of youth and beauty from beneath those jetty eyelashes; Harry Thorsby, by an equal chance, sate close to Letty, whose fair, fresh, heart-lit features cast a sunshine round her; and George, the grave but genial George Woodburn, occupied a place betwixt Mr. and Mrs. Degge, to whom he could show all attention. Mr. Woodburn and Mrs. Heritage were neighbours, and seemed to have much of interest to talk of, in which Ann and her mother occasionally joined, but what they said could not be heard from the clatter of plates and youthful tongues in full play.

Betty Trapps, and Tom Boddily, in his old soldier's coat, waited on the company; and Sylvanus Crook, as something more than a servant, had a seat amongst the guests. No happier party ever dined under an oak in a tented field, as Thorsby called it. It was wonderful, too, to see the dexterity and ability with which Tom Boddily performed

his office. Ever and anon Thorsby had a witty word with him, and Tom was never without his answer. "Where didst thou learn to serve at table so nicely?" asked Mrs. Heritage.

"With my captain, madam."

"Oh! thou hast been in the army?"

"Yes, madam, served fifteen years."

"And wast thou in any battles?"

"Well, ma'am, I can't say that I haven't been in battles, but none where much powder was spent. I was in the militia."

"Oh! that was it. Thou never wast out of England?"

"No, madam."

"And thy captain?"

"That's the present Squire Chillington, madam. I wor his servant many years while in the regiment."

"And how camest thee to leave him?"

Tom looked significant; a smile stole round his mouth. "Well, the captain, ma'am, left me."

"Oh, indeed! I hope thou hast not offended him justly, anyway?"

"No, madam, oh no! not in the least; but people may know too much, and it is inconvenient."

There was some laughter. "Chillington, we all know, has been a very wild fellow," said Mr. Woodburn; "was it not so, Tom?"

"True, sir, true," said Tom.

"Tell us a little about him, when you were with him, Tom," said Harry Thorsby.

"Well," said Tom, as he continued to run about, changing plates and attending to everybody's wants, "I don't like telling tales out of school; but since my old master signed the warrant with Squire Bullockshed for picking up a hare that I happened to see in a snickle" —here Tom was drowned in a loud burst of laughter from the gentlemen—"since he did that, I don't feel so tongue-tied as afore. Well, it is true enough, my captain did sow his wild oats pretty freely. It was a gay

time, that regimental time. What with a splendid mess, and fine horses, and dogs, and fine"—Tom hesitated a moment—" fine people of one sort or another, money did go, though. My captain blazed away faster than any of them. Wasn't he heir to the fine old estate of Beech-Lees? Well, it was the old story: my captain wor continually out at the elbows. Money, money, money wor always wanted. The governor, as he called him, that wor his honoured father, after a while stopped dead short, and wouldn't out with a stiver. 'Tom,' he said—that worn't me, it wor my captain, he wor named Thomas —'Tom,' he said, 'must live on his pay.' Live on his pay! The pay of the whole regiment wouldn't have done for him. Well, he used to write to his father's steward to send him money, telling him he should find the good of it when he came to the estate. And the steward sent him money for awhile, but then he writ that the Squire had got an

inkling of what he was doing, and kept such a strict ferreting into the books, that it was all up in that quarter. The steward remained a good sum out of pocket.

"I believe my captain had managed to borrow considerable sums of the Jews on what are called past-a-bits, but the Squire soon let them know that the estate wasn't entailed, and that was up too, and the Jews were as keen after him as so many hounds after a hare. As to borrowing of any of the brother officers, they were all pretty much of a muchness, that is, they were all very able to borrow, but not to lend. There was only one of them that was able to lend, and that was the Major, and he had the unfortunate name of Need."—Much laughter, and loud cachination, or what Betty Trapps called crowing, from Thorsby.—"Major Need was always in need. You might as well have asked fire of a fish as money of the Major. He always pleaded poverty, and said the mess was really so

extravagant, he should get all the leave of absence that he could. And you may believe me, he did spend the greater part of his time at home. And what was he doing? Why, he was just as busy as a bee in planting a vast lot of poor, sandy land that he had with larch trees. There he was, while my captain and the rest of the officers were sowing their wild oats, always busy in sowing larch seed, and having a lot of men at work planting the young trees out as they grew. There you might see this poor man, who never had a penny to lend to a brother officer in distress, riding away to his beggarly land not worth a rent of a shilling an acre, mounted on a sturdy pony, bearing a sort of bag slung on his back, with his dinner in it, and a big pruning-knife and a little saw in it besides—going, he was, to prune his larches as they wanted it, and keep a sharp eye on his men at work. Well, I was that way the other day, and bless my stars! what a vast

of fine woods that man has, and they tell me he is as rich as a duke, him that in our regiment's time never had a penny to lend or spend.

" Well, it came to a sharp pass at last with my captain. The lady asked if I had been in any battles. Ay, troth, I was at that time in battles enow, with those unreasonablest of varmint, called duns. My captain would have been awlis in prison if mother nature had not blest me with a good share of contrivance, and a skull that could stand sharp acquaintance with constables' staffs. Oh! if I do miss heaven at last, it will be for all the lies I told them, for my captain. How often I have sworn that he was gone down to see his honoured father, who was on his death-bed, when all the while he was trembling in every limb behind the door that I held in their faces.

" Once I was nearly sold. Oh, my gracious! didn't my heart leap into my mouth!

Things were come to such a pass that something very ingenious must be thought of. 'I have it,' said I to the captain. 'I'll hire a coffin, and when they come I'll say you're just dead.' 'No, Tom!' he said, 'no; that won't do.' Then said I, 'I give in, and there's nothing for it but the debtor's gaol.' Well, that cowed him. 'Do as you like, Tom,' said he; and very soon I had hired a good oak-coffin and gilt breastplate from the undertaker just by. 'Now,' said I, 'when these fellows come thundering to-day, as I hear they will—they swear they'll break locks—you just lie down in a sheet, and leave the rest to me.'

"Well, no sooner said than done. I had hardly time to lock the door, and compose my captain's goodly limbs decently in the coffin, and put the lid loosely on, when, bang! came the constables at the door. Quick, quick did I open. 'Oh, is it you?' said I, sobbing bitterly, and with brooks of

water running from my eyes, for I had a famous strong onion hidden in my handkerchief. 'Oh! come in,' said I, 'come in, and see what you've done. You've broken his heart at last. There he lies! Oh, enjoy the sight—do, do! Enjoy the misery you have made. Oh! what hearts are bleeding down the country there for this handsome, good-hearted young gentleman that you've killed!'

"I off with the coffin-lid—ghastly looked my captain's face, with whiting that I had daubed it with. 'There!' said I, 'you've killed him. Your worrying had brought him so low, he catched the typhus, and——' Here my tears stopped my voice. 'Fie! typhus!' exclaimed the fellows in horror, and out they brushed. But it was nearly all ruination. My captain, impatient of his coffin, lifted his head before they were well out of the door, and said, laughing, 'Are those scamps gone?' Quick one of the constables turned, 'Didn't I hear something?

Didn't I see something stir?' 'Yes, yes,' said I, 'you saw the wind from the door blow the shroud up, and with it, no doubt, the air of the fever. Ha! away!—it is as much as your life is worth.' The man bolted, and for that time all was right. But it was a very near touch, with the captain's impatience." (Loud Hear, hears! and much laughter.)

"Lucky for us, the regiment marched next day, and my captain had gone off in the night. But at our next quarters it was not much better. The captain was clean swept out of money, trinkets, and of almost all his clothes. He had a gold watch which his mother had given him. It cost forty guineas, and that he had kept through all. One day he said to me on the parade ground, 'Tom, I have left my watch on the chimney-piece in my room. Fetch it, or I shall not know when to dismiss the men.' I knew very well what it meant. He could have

dismissed the men well enough, for the town-hall clock was right opposite to him, as he fronted the ranks. I knew that he meant at last to take it to my uncle."

"Hadst thou an uncle living there?" interrupted Mrs. Heritage.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Tom, drily. "Poor men have uncles everywhere, and very kind ones; their doors always stand open to them."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Mrs. Heritage, in her wealthy ignorance of such uncles, and amid the stifled merriment of the young people.

"What I mean," said Tom, "is, he meant to put it up the spout."

"Up the spout!" said Mrs. Heritage, in augmented astonishment. "He meant to hide it?"

Tom nodded assent.

"He meant to pawn it, he means," said Mr. Woodburn. "That's his slang," seeing that Thorsby's good manners were choking him.

"Oh, that was it!" said Mrs. Heritage.

"Yes, that was just it," said Tom. "I went off with a sad heart on the errand, but I soon had a sadder. When I went into my captain's room, the watch was not there. I called the landlady, and said, 'Who has taken Captain Chillington's watch away?'

"'His watch?' said the landlady, 'why, he sent for it!'

"'Sent for it!—by whom?' said I.

"'Why, a young man, in a dark grey livery and silver-laced hat, came for it. He said he was Major Need's man, and Captain Chillington had asked him to come and fetch his watch from the parlour mantel-piece, and his overcoat from the peg in the passage.'

"The ground seemed opening under my feet. 'Did he say where the watch was?'

"'Yes,' said the landlady.

"'And the overcoat on the peg?'

"'He did,' said she, now all in a tremor of fright. 'He seemed to know so exactly all

about them, that I never suspected nothing at all.'

"'And the coat's gone, too?' said I, looking into the passage.

"'That's sartain,' said the woman.

"I rushed out; there was no time to lose. I ran round to all the pawnbrokers first; then to the police-office; then to the town-crier. I offered five pounds reward to any one who would detect the thief; I did that on my own head; I did not go to the parade—it would have been of no use—it would have been over — and I did not like to break the news. When I came back chop-fallen to our lodgings, there was my captain. The landlady had told him all. There he sate, dropped down into a low chair, and he looked now more like a corpse than he did in the coffin. He never spoke. I was horribly afraid that he'd go off into an apoplexy, or something, or lose his senses. 'Captain,' said I, 'you've heard it.' He never moved.

'Captain!' said I again, louder, and shook him by the shoulder. 'It is no use sorrowing or fretting, we must be wide awake to recover the property.'

"Then he gave a great sigh, and seemed to rouse a little. 'It is of no use,' he said; 'that was an old hand, that thief. Catch a weazel asleep, and shave his eye-brows. You'll never catch that scamp. It is all up, Boddily. That was my last throw. There is not a single stone in this cursed world left unturned,' and he went quite stupid and stony again.

"'Captain,' said I, 'it is of no use talking that way. We must be after the fellow, we shall catch him before he leaves the town. Faint heart never won fair lady. Rouse, captain, rouse; we'll have him yet, and all will be well.'

"But you might as well have tried to rouse a milestone. At last he burst into tears, and he cried like a child, and rocked to and fro in his chair with his face buried in his hands.

He sprang up suddenly, and snatched a pistol from the mantel-piece; I tore it from his hand.

"'Are you mad, captain?' I said. 'Would you go headlong to everlasting destruction, and kill your mother with grief?' That seemed to sober him a little. 'Cheer up,' said I; 'it's an old saying, "When things come to the worst, they begin to mend."'

"'Never with me, Tom,' he said, throwing himself down, and looking the pictur o' despair. 'Never with me—all's up. I'm a doomed man—nothing prospers with me.'

"I could have told him why they did not prosper, soon enough; but he'd enough on him without any cut from me. As for me, I was at my wits' end. How should I manage to keep him from laying violent hands on himself? I was about to ring for the landlady, and, while telling her to bring some brandy, whisper to her to run for help—

when, bang! comes a thundering knock at the door. 'Lock it, quick, woman!' said I. But even that did not rouse my captain. 'They are there, again, let them come,' he said—'let them do their worst.'

"The landlady, however, had opened the door on the chain. Women are awlis sharper about such things than we are. In she comes with a letter and a great black seal with a coat of arms. The captain glanced at it,—he pounced on it like a hawk—he tore it open and read. His hand trembled, then shook violently—the letter dropped, and he dropped, too. I caught him in my arms. 'Water!' I cried, 'water! brandy!' The landlady flew. We drenched him with water; we tried to force some brandy between his teeth, but couldn't. They were set as fast as rocks. At length he gave a deep sike (sigh), opened his eyes, and drank off the whole glass of brandy.

"'Troubles never comes alone,' he said,

beginning to speak. 'The governor is dead, Tom; we must be off to-night for Beech-Lees; run and take our places in the night-coach.' He tried to look as if the blow of this news had been a stunner, but I could see that it was huge relief. Mountains were off his shoulders. The governor was past all *his* troubles, and there was that fine old property of Beech-Lees. I had no further fear about my captain.

"'But,' said I—'I'll run to the coach—but the money for the fares?'

"'Oh!' said he, looking about for the fallen letter, 'there's money enough.'

"I picked it up, and another bit of paper.

"'That's it,' said he. 'There's no want of money, now.' It was a Bank of England note for one hundred pounds. 'Get the Major to change it into small notes,' he said. 'He has always bushels of them.'

"I was running out to take our places,

when I went slap up against a constable. 'The carrion have got scent of the carcass already,' said I to myself. The next moment I saw my captain's gold watch in his hand. 'We have found this,' he said, 'at a pawnbroker's, pledged for five pounds. 'All right,' said the captain. 'Catch the man, and I'll give you fifty pounds, and come and prosecute the thief.'

"He took the watch. 'That's it,' he said; and put it in his pocket.

"'But we shall want that,' said the man, 'when we charge the thief before the magistrate.'

"'Catch your hare, and then we'll cook him,' said my captain, now grown quite cheery. The man looked as if he would have the watch back to produce in court. 'When you have the thief,' said the captain, 'you will have both the watch and myself to produce; in the meantime, Tom, take this good fellow, and give him a couple of guineas,

for his present trouble ; be quick, we have no time to spare.'

" That night we were on the way ; the next morning we were at Beech-Lees. Soon after Captain Chillington got married, and made a thorough change in his establishment. Among the rest, I went to the wall ; but I would not have minded, after all we suffered together in our sogering days, if he hadn't signed that warrant of Squire Bullockshed's. That was a cut that will stick by me till the day of my death."

By this time, the dinner was over, the dishes all removed, for Tom Boddily had been rapidly serving and changing all the time he talked. A splendid dessert was set on the table, of grapes and peaches from the hot-houses of Rockville, mellow gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, and cherries from the Grange garden ; and Tom made his bow amid many thanks for his story, and withdrew with Betty Trapps, to play his part

amongst the wainrows. Great commendations were heaped on Tom for his ability in both telling a story and waiting at table, and his services were not likely to be neglected on fitting occasions from that day.

Soon after this, Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn and Mrs. Heritage rose and walked out into the pleasant sunny air of the field. A soft breeze was blowing, or rather breathing over the warm, dry country. Mr. Woodburn joined Mr. and Mrs. Degge, and Mrs. Woodburn and Mrs. Heritage wandered up the field where it was cleared of the hay, and seated themselves on a bank beneath a noble crab-apple-tree covered with green fruit. They appeared deeply absorbed in conversation, and any one listening might have caught frequently the names of Sir Emanuel Clavering, his son Henry, and of Ann Woodburn. There was a mother's care in the usually bright and comely face of Mrs. Woodburn: there was

higher care in the noble countenance of Mrs. Heritage.

"Then thou dost not think," she said, looking earnestly at Mrs. Woodburn, "that he really does practise ungodly arts?"

"Oh, no!" replied Mrs. Woodburn. "That is all the silly talk of the silly, superstitious country people—that is, country people of all sorts—for the farmers are as superstitious as the labourers: and when Sir Emanuel appeared at the hustings at Castleborough to nominate a friend of his as candidate for a parliamentary seat for the county, the farmers set up a great yell, and would not hear him, saying, 'That is old Clavering who deals with the Devil.' But it is all because he is a great astronomer, and is seen going out at night to his observatory. The truth is, as I believe—and a sad truth it is, he does not believe in our Saviour."

"Oh! how very sad! how very deplorable!" said the pious-hearted Friend. "I feel

greatly drawn to speak with him on the subject. Such a very clever and agreeable man as he is ; and to be so far overseen. Truly it is sad that this world's knowledge makes us blind. And his son Henry, dost thou think he has instilled these unhappy sentiments into him ? "

Here Mrs. Woodburn bent closer to her friend, and the conversation became still more earnest and engrossing, but carried on in a low tone, and with many pauses, and significant looks and gestures, and not unfrequent deeply-drawn sighs.

But the sounds from the tent below, which had been hitherto those of a continuous clatter of tongues, and of merry laughter, now came forth in a chorus of singing voices, in which the bass tones of Thorsby were predominant amid the clear, sweet voices of the young ladies. The tent was like a great cage of warbling birds, or as Mrs. Woodburn said, of happy angels. " Oh ! " said she, " I do

love to see young people happy. No one knows what after-life may bring. For youth —so a poem which I saw in the newspaper the other day said—

> 'It is the time of roses,
> They pluck them as they pass.'"

"I only hope," said the careful Mrs. Heritage, "that they won't teach my Millicent any vanities. She is naturally, I think, only too fond of music and singing; and thou knowest our Society sees such a snare in these things."

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Heritage, Miss Heritage will hear nothing here but what is perfectly good. They have been singing only Burns's sweet 'Banks and Braes o' bonnie Doon.'"

To the fair Friend, whatever might be the moral qualities of "Bonnie Doon" was all unknown; but the discussion was cut short by the whole youthful troop issuing from the tent, and going briskly across the field, and

disappearing in a wood that ran down towards the river. Nothing more was heard of them till tea-time, except an occasional call of a clear, female voice, or a note of laughter, for awhile, and then all was still. About five o'clock, the workmen having their "four-o'-clock," as it is termed, amid the haycocks, were seen bringing up the apparatus and materials for tea, which was not set out in the tent, but this time amongst the hay in front, abundance of cushions being brought for the company to sit upon. Once more the horn was lustily winded, this time by Mr. Woodburn, George having gone off with the rest of the young people: and, anon, like Robin Hood and his men, they were seen coming gaily over the hill.

They all came in glowing with heat and evident pleasure. Letty Woodburn looked like a sylph, but a very rosy one, all light and gladness, as if ready to fly away: even the gentle Millicent's clear blue eyes flashed a

radiant enjoyment. According to their account they had been taking botanic lessons from Dr. Leroy, and had suddenly come upon Mr. Thomas Clavering, the rector of Cotmanhaye, fishing in the river, who had amused them with a world of anecdotes about birds and animals. He had assured them that he had seen a jay with an audience of wondering birds all around him on a tree, whom he was astonishing by the cleverest imitations of different singing birds.

Thereupon Sylvanus Crook said he quite believed that. He was "quite satisfied that birds sing songs of praise to their Creator quite intelligible to birds."

"But," said Harry Thorsby, "they always sing the same airs."

"Yes, Henry Thorsby, it may seem so to thee; but in my opinion, if we could understand them, we should find them poets far beyond many of our own kind. They do not, indeed, sing about men's actions, but of the

goodness of God to birds, and of the beauties and pleasures of creation. Hast thou not heard, friend Henry, of the Eastern Sultan's minister who knew the language of birds?"

"Oh! that's a fable, friend Crook," said Thorsby, "an Eastern apologue."

"Maybe," said Sylvanus; "but I think that is a very beautiful observation of Izaak Walton, the great angler; who on hearing the nightingale sing, said:—'If God gave such music here to the wicked and ungrateful, what will He give to his saints in heaven?'"

"So you do like music after all, friend Crook?" asked Thorsby, sarcastically.

"Yes, natural music," said Sylvanus, and Harry Thorsby was girding him up for a regular dispute on the Friend's objection to music, but he was prevented by all seconding Sylvanus's quotation of Izaak Walton as extremely beautiful, and by Mr. Woodburn asking Tom Boddily what he had been doing

lately, intending to draw out some of his country humour.

"I've been a little on my travels," said Tom.

"Oh, indeed! where?"

"Well, I crossed an arm of the sea, as my companion, simple Simon Grainger, called it, and got into a country on the other side."

"Ah! where did you cross this arm of the sea?"

"At a place called Sawley."

"Sawley!" said several voices at once. "Why, that is on the Trent, Tom."

"Well, I dare say it is; but Grainger, who never was five miles from home, insisted that it was an arm of the sea."

"And what did you do on the other side, Tom?"

"We were employed in getting gravel for roads out of the river Soar with a machine, and Grainger had a fine opportunity of earning a guinea in less time than he ever earned

a groat in his life, if he had had faith enough."

"Not faith enough?"

"No," said Tom. "You see, a gentleman, as he was crossing the ferry near us, pulled out his gold watch to look at the time, and let it drop into the river. It was quite plain to be seen, for the river is as clear almost as air, but it was deeper than it seemed. The gentleman tried to get it up with his stick, but could not reach it, and he offered a guinea to any of the passengers as would fetch it up. None of them would. So the ferryman calls to us, and says to Grainger, 'Old fellow, you've good six feet of stuff in you; just jump in and get hold of the watch, and there's a guinea for you.' 'No, thank you,' said Grainger; 'don't you believe it; I can trust God Almighty on the ground, or in a tree, but not i' th' water.' It was no use urging him. 'Stop a minute,' said I, 'I'm but a short 'un, but there are more

ways than one of roasting apples.' So I asked the gentleman to lend me his stick. 'It's not long enough, my man,' says he. 'Isn't it?' says I, taking the stick. I just laid mysen down on the boat, stripped my arm bare to the shoulder, and in a jiffy I had twisted the hook of the stick into the guard-chain, and up comes the watch, and down goes the guinea into my pocket. 'There's not much of thee,' said the gentleman, looking at me, as he handed me the guinea; 'but thou'st got thy share of brains.'"

Sylvanus thought Grainger's speech almost impious, not to trust God in the water as well as on the land. "Ah! poor, ignorant man," said Mrs. Heritage, "his faith only stops short at one point, and ours at another. Is there not a limit to the faith of every one of us?" she asked. "Would not Sylvanus find a limit to his faith in some other direction?"

"Ay, that he would," said Thorsby, as he lay kicking his legs about in the hay. "Let him walk over burning ploughshares as they did in the middle ages."

"As for that," said Sylvanus, "I could walk over them readily enough, but I would decline walking upon them."

"Would your faith enable you to climb up the church-steeple and stand on the weather-cock, and turn round upon it, as a foolish fellow did the other day?"

"No," said Sylvanus, "there, friend Henry, thou hast indeed found my limit. My faith is not a foolish faith. I would not tempt Providence."

"Well, dear friends," said Mrs. Heritage, as if afraid that the conversation might take a rather caustic turn, "I think the evening warns us to remove. Dear Millicent, draw thy shawl round thee, and our other dear young women friends I would caution to do the same. You have been warm with your

little excursion. And here I would remark that it is the custom of our Society on social occasions, sometimes to drop into a little solemn silence, in which something beneficial may arise in our minds. I would kindly invite you to such an exercise."

When all had fallen into a silence, which to some of them was a rather curious thing amid the pleasures of a festive day, Mrs. Heritage, at first in a soft and musical voice, which by degrees acquired depth and earnestness, said—"Dear friends, this has been a beautiful, and to all of us, I think, a very happy day. Let us not forget to be grateful to the Giver of it, and of all good gifts. Days come and go, and, however stationary we may seem, we are going with them. The bloom and gaiety of youth, beautiful as it is, is evanescent as the glories of yon western sky."

At these words all involuntarily turned, and saw one of the most glorious and gor-

geous spectacles imaginable. All the western sky was flooded with waves of gold and purple, burning in and through clouds of richest magnificence. An opening in them gave passage to the blaze of the departing sun, and resembled the gates of heaven thrown wide, and, within them, far receding regions of celestial splendour. All below, under the effect of this intense radiance, looked dark and mysterious, like a weird land of cimmerian shadow that might hide some mystery.

The fair speaker paused awhile as every eye was earnestly fixed on the scene, then went on, as if speaking the thought of every bosom. "Truly 'this may be said to be the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' What power but that of almighty wisdom could suddenly put forth a celestial emblazonment like that? What architect could design such a wondrous and portentous portal to imperial city or palace? What painter could

suffuse it with hues and glories so divine? Yet, such is the prodigality of the Omnipotent Artist, who has sent forth, in a moment almost, that glorious vision, that in a few moments He will suffer it to depart, as if it were of no value. We, or most of us, visit the galleries of great painters; we gaze in enthusiasm on the imitations of nature which they hang upon our walls, and decree immortality to them for their inspired achievement; yet the King of artists every day spreads before our eyes, and the eyes of the simplest and the poorest, landscapes and aerial paintings which no mortal hand can ever equal, and no man lays it to heart. The peasant, returning home at this hour along some solitary vale, sees a picture such as no so-called immortal master ever accomplished, such as no king's house can boast. Yet we feel no wonder; we utter no praise. Behold! and the marvellous scene is gone!"

All again turned, and saw but a grey, dull

sky, and below the solemn gloom deepened into intense blackness. The speaker paused; her fair, finely-developed face, seemed rapt as into an ecstasy, still and passionless; it was as if the inner eye looked spirit-like through the outer, and saw deep into the looming night of the western quarter. A deep sigh escaped her, and with softer and strangely thrilling tones, she said,

"I feel it, dear friends, laid solemnly upon me to utter words which seem not to befit a day of gladness. My spirit wrestles with it, and would flee from the burden, as the Hebrew prophet fled from the burden of Nineveh; but a mightier, holier power compels me, and I must obey." A strange shudder passed through the youthful listeners, and Letty, greatly excited, half sprang up and cried, "Oh, don't! don't!" But George quietly held her down, and put his arm round her, clasping her with brotherly affection. The speaker, as if uncon-

scious of the sensation she had evoked, went on.

"Beautiful, very beautiful was yonder sky; beautiful, very beautiful are the days which have passed here. Dark, however, the gloom which underlay that glory of colours. I feel some of us, perhaps many of us, perhaps all, more or less, baptised into that darkness. We are passing deep into its shadowy regions. We are pilgrims and wayfarers through the valley of the shadow of death, through the midnight wastes of blackness and despair. Oh! thou heavenly and tender Father! extend thy omnipotent hand. Lift us over the torrents rolling through the deep, deep darkness; bear us up in thy loving, unforsaking arms!"

The speaker paused, and sate still as a stone image. Her eyes were open, but the awed and affrighted circle could not tell for their lives on what they rested. Again, slowly lifting her hand, and pointing westward, she said—

"Yes, ever-living, ever-merciful Father, Thou dost lead us. It is borne in upon my heart to know and feel that to all who hold fast their faith, there shall be a safe re-issue from the temporary gloom. Not a hair shall fall from the head of any of us. Thou wilt baptise us into sorrow, only to inspire us with wisdom, with faith, with love. Over that gloom of a little time, again the heavenly glow of Thy divine pencil, the radiance of Thy inner and inexhaustible beams of beauty, shall steal abroad; and the latter shall be lovelier, though more subdued, than the former pageant. All Thy colours of life shall be clearer, purer, more lofty, more etherial. The after-glow of our evening shall be more tenderly fair, more serenely blessed, than our noon has been strong and rejoicing. Amen!"

During the latter part of this startling address, the eyes of the company had mechanically followed the hand of the speaker, and

saw the colours of the sunset once more travel out, kindle anew, as it were, all over the western sky in most exquisite and trance-like beauty. It seemed as if the inspired woman had command of the elements, and that their magic limnings followed the motion of her hand; the soul within, however, did but follow the course of nature and the promptings of God. How often, in future years, did every member of that company reflect on these words with wonder, though they now somewhat offended the sense of fitness in many of those who deemed auguries of evil ill-timed as the finale of a day of youthful rejoicing. The speaker, however, rose up, and, without any apology, shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn, said "Farewell" to her young friends, and taking Millicent's arm, walked silently towards the Grange, at whose gate her carriage and that of the Degges were waiting to take them home.

All the rest followed in silence. At the gate of the Grange Mr. Woodburn pressed Mrs. Heritage to go in and take some supper, but she declined, the carriages rolled away, and the company dispersed. Harry Thorsby, however, went in, and remained for some time. But no one was inclined for supper, though a very charming one was set out, with abundance of creams, and custards, and other rural dainties. Letty was in a state of strange excitement. She appeared quite hysterical, now bursting into tears, now laughing outright, and at length sunk down in a fainting fit on the sofa. There was great alarm and agitation; but Mr. Woodburn said, "Be quiet; don't disturb her; only stand back, and let her have air; she will soon be better."

"It is that silly, preaching woman," said Thorsby. "What does she mean by coming here and croaking of all sorts of trouble, like a confounded old beldame as she is?"

"Gently!" said Leonard Woodburn. "If no evil is meant us, Mrs. Heritage cannot and does not wish to bring it. If some evil does impend over us—for what mortal shall say that he is insurance-proof against it?—let us rather pray earnestly that it may be averted, or that we may have strength given us to bear it. But all that she means, probably, are the inevitable trials that this life sends us all. It is merely her Quaker language."

By this time Letty had recovered her consciousness, opened her eyes, sprung up, saying, "Oh! what have I been doing? Why are you all standing there, and looking so strange?"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Woodburn, kissing her, "you were too much excited by Mrs. Heritage's sermon; you have fainted; you had better go to bed."

Letty gave a shudder, wiped her face, on which the tears stood glittering, and said,

"Oh, why *did* she talk so! What *could* possess her! Yes, mother dear, I will go to bed." She smiled, kissed her father, throwing her arms round his neck, shook hands with the rest, and sprang away up-stairs, followed by Ann — who was also deeply moved—and her mother.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NICE SAMPLE OF FARMERS.

About ten o'clock in the morning, Harry Thorsby rode into the farm-yard at Woodburn Grange, gave his horse to the groom, and entered the house-place from the garden. There sat the whole family—a perfectly rural group—George excepted. The ample bay-window of that large cool room was thrown open on the sunny side, and the sunshine and shadow flickered pleasantly amongst the rose and jasmine boughs round the window. On the cool brick-floor stood a large basket of ripe gooseberries, and Mrs. Woodburn and Ann were busy clipping off their eyes and stalks, and dropping them into dishes on their knees, in preparation for preserving.

Mr. Woodburn sat on the other side of the circle, shelling peas—a job he was very fond of—into a shallow basket on his knees, from a large one on another chair at his side. Letty sat on a scarlet cushion on the floor in the middle, reading from some book to the rest. She was in a white morning-dress, and Thorsby's eyes were first directed to her.

"Good morning!" said he, pleasantly, "all you very useful people. And you, Letty?"

Letty brightened up with a rosy blush and brilliant eyes, and said, "Oh, quite well!"

"What, no worse for that Jeremiad yesterday?"

"Oh, no!—why should I? As father says, it was only Quaker phraseology."

"Then I wish," said Thorsby, seating himself, "she would keep it exclusively for the Quakers."

"Well, I really wish she would," said Ann. "Poor, dear Letty was very much put out by it. She was very restless and feverish in her sleep. She slept with her eyes partly open, and glistening, which frightened me, for I got up, the night being light, several times, to look at her, and woke her because she was trying to cry out in her dreams."

"Oh, I was dreaming all sorts of horrid impossibilities," said Letty, laughing; "climbing over the tops of houses, and the like, and not knowing how to get down."

"Ah, there it is!" said Thorsby. "I shall call and tell that dove-coloured Pythoness that this sort of thing won't do."

"No!" exclaimed all the family at once, Letty more energetically than the rest, "you must not do that. It would grieve poor Mrs. Heritage so; and there is nothing amiss. I am quite well," said Letty.

"Grieve poor Mrs. Heritage, indeed!" replied Thorsby. "These canting, religious

people, however, don't care whom they grieve."

"I cannot agree to that, Mr. Thorsby," said Ann. "No nobler-hearted or more humane woman lives than Mrs. Heritage."

"I think," said Thorsby, "they are selfish, money-grubbing people, these Quakers; and that there's not much to choose between 'the Quaker sly' and canting Methodist."

"Or a backbiting profanian!" said a voice behind.

Thorsby turned quickly round, and exclaimed, "Oh, Betty Trapps, so you are there! eh?"

Betty had come in for a pie-dish from the great cupboard, and caught the fling at the Methodists just as she was going out.

"Ah! just in time, Betty," said Thorsby. "I've got a pleasant anecdote for you."

Betty was moving off, without deigning a reply, when Thorsby said—

"You know that your old acquaintance, Molly Ayre, is dead?"

"No," said Betty, stopping at once. "No. Is it true?"

"True as gospel," said Thorsby; "and I want to tell you her dying sayings."

Betty was riveted to the spot by the news of Molly Ayre's departure and her dying sayings, for she had a great veneration for dying sayings.

"Well," said Thorsby, addressing the company at large, "you know that old Sam Ayre, as we familiarly call him, is a bag-hosier,—that is, he possesses a score of stocking-frames, employs as many stock-ingers, and brings in his hose to our ware-house. Molly, his wife, kept a little shop. They were both zealous Methodists, and Sam——"

"You might as well say 'Samuel,' Mr. Thorsby," interrupted Betty.

"And Sam, or Samuel, is a class-leader in

high repute. Yesterday comes somebody begging my mother to go to Mr. Ayre's, as the Missis was dying. Molly Ayre had been a servant at my grandfather's. My mother hurried off. The poor woman evidently was near her end, and was giving some last directions to her husband, who sat, burly man as he is, drowned in tears on the bed-side.

"'Well,' continued the dying woman, 'my dear Samuel, thou'll find all th' accounts o' th' shop right in th' book in that drawer there. There's forty pounds owing to different people, principally to Mr. Fairfax, the grocer. Thou'll see it punctually paid?'

"'Eh! poor dear soul!' said the husband, 'wandering! You see she's quite wandering!'

"'And,' continued the dying wife, 'there's a good deal more owing to us. Thou'll find it all down i' the book; and i' th' same drawer a good heap of money in a stocking.'

"'Eh! blessed, dear creetur!' said Ayre,

the tears streaming down his cheeks—'poor, dear creetur! Sensible to th' last minute!—sensible to th' last minute!'"

"Oh, get out with thy profanities!" said Betty, going out, and pulling the door after her smartly; not even staying to hear how Molly Ayre went at last.

The whole Woodburn family could not help laughing heartily at this picture of human nature, though they were afraid it might reach Betty's indignant ears.

"As to the Quakers, however," continued Mr. Woodburn, "I must assert that though they are devoted to getting money, some of them make a very good use of it. The Heritages are extremely benevolent, and expend large sums every year in adding to the comforts and in promoting education amongst the poor, both in Woodburn and in the far greater field of Castleborough."

"Ay, and they gather in plenty to do it with," said Thorsby. "Why, Mr. Heritage's

gold may go out by pecksfull, but it flows in by bushelsfull."

"That may be," said Mr. Woodburn, "but it does not alter my position. Look, then, at Mr. Dell. Now, he is a man who is not in their Society, but he goes to their meeting, and associates with them, from his sense of their more thoroughly moral character than that of most other people. There is a man who is always planning some good for the people. He has himself built and endowed a free school for the poor; and has worked actively in creating public gardens and public walks in all directions."

"And that intelligent and liberal man," said Thorsby, "can go and sit two mortal hours, on a Sunday morning, in their meetings, where not a word is uttered! Wonderful!"

"Well," said Mr. Woodburn, "that is rather wonderful; but then he tells me that he takes the Bible in his pocket, and reads a chapter or two, and meditates on it."

"He might do that at home," said Thorsby.

"He might," said Mr. Woodburn, "and we might and may leave people to their peculiar notions of what suits them best," quietly proceeding with his pea-shelling. "And look, again, at that brave old man, William Fairfax, the eminent grocer and hop-dealer. Did you ever see a picture of the great law reformer, Jeremy Bentham? or of Benjamin Franklin?"

"Of Franklin, of course," said Thorsby.

"Well," continued Mr. Woodburn, "there is a great general resemblance in the persons of these three great men, for I place Mr. Fairfax in the scale of great men. They were, and he is, of middle height and strong build. They had, and Mr. Fairfax has, a style of countenance with strong features, somewhat prominent nose, and their hair hanging in abundance on their shoulders. Mr. Fairfax dresses, as you know, in plain drab, with waistcoat long and with flaps; and

he may often be seen going about the town without his hat, and looking very abstracted, and with one hand thrust into his waistcoat about half-way down.

"Now there is a man who, if he had had the same education, or the same ambition, as Franklin or Bentham, would have achieved as great a reputation, for he has as great and original abilities. It is lucky for Castleborough, however, that his lot is cast there. He has always stood forth for the good and independence of the place without any regard to his own interest."

"But his interests have flourished finely," said Thorsby.

"True," added Mr. Woodburn, "but not the less true his daring and noble independence. Awhile ago, Lord Middleton sent his servant to say, that if Mr. Fairfax did not vote for the Tory candidate for one of the borough seats in Parliament, he would withdraw his custom. 'Tell thy master, young

man,' said Mr. Fairfax, 'that I am not an Esau to sell my birthright for a mess of pottage. He is free to take his custom where he pleases.' His lordship withdrew his custom accordingly, but he soon found that he could not get served so well anywhere else, and so went back to Mr. Fairfax's shop. But the most remarkable thing is, that Mr. Fairfax has never paid a penny of the property tax."

"And do you call that honest, Mr. Woodburn?" asked Thorsby.

"Yes, perfectly so, in his case. The law was expressly stated, in the preamble to the act, to be for the prosecution of the war. Mr. Fairfax, as a Quaker, has a decided objection to war, as unchristian. He could not pay it; but he was quite ready to allow the law to take his property for that purpose. He was willing to suffer, though he could not conscientiously pay the tax voluntarily. Well, what was the consequence? Distraints

were made repeatedly on his goods for the amount. Nobody would buy them; and they were always bought back at the expiration of the number of days prescribed by law. At length the Commissioners sent for him. William Fairfax walked into their presence without his hat, and with his right-hand, as usual, thrust into his waistcoat.

"'Mr. Fairfax,' said the clerk to the Commissioners—a man of very dubious character, I must say—'Mr. Fairfax, what trouble you give us. It is the law of the land, and you must obey it.'

"'If,' said Mr. Fairfax, 'Parliament passes an act to set up Nebuchadnezzar's image again, wouldst bow down to it?'

"'No,' said the clerk. 'I would fly my country first!'

"'Yes, the wicked flee when no man pursueth,' said Mr. Fairfax, quietly; 'the righteous stands his ground as bold as a lion.'

"Mr. Fairfax stood erect, grave, and without moving a muscle, in the midst of the circle of Commissioners, who burst into a roar of laughter at the hard hit which their lawyer clerk had received. William Fairfax walked unmoved out of the room, and a few weeks after the act was repealed. He never paid a penny of it."

"Then I think he should," said Thorsby.

"I don't," said Mr. Woodburn. "I think every man should stand boldly by his conscientious convictions. Mr. Fairfax did not care a straw about the amount of the tax. It was the public of Castleborough, doing homage to his uprightness, that refused to mulct him with the tax and the costs of the distraint. I could tell you many other remarkable acts of this genuine Quaker, as far from any cant or selfishness as Pole is from Pole; but I see George standing with a proposition in his face."

"Yes," said George, "it is a most delicious

forenoon. The air is blowing charmingly, and tempers the heat. I am going to Hillmartin and a little beyond, and I want you, Letty, to mount Fairaway, and have a gallop in the breeze. It is what you want to take the dismals out of your blood. Ann, what say you ?"

"I say that I shall stay and help mother; but, Letty, by all means, and Mr. Thorsby will join you."

"Of course he will," said Thorsby.

"Your horse is saddled, Letty," added George. "I will have him brought out, and so away, and get on your habit."

Letty was soon arrayed in hat and habit, looking as fresh and blithe as if nothing had disturbed her nerves: and anon the three, with Letty in the middle, were taking their way up the ascending road towards Hillmartin. It was, as George had said, a delicious July day. Over the sky light clouds were scattered; the breeze, soft yet fresh,

made the sun genial and not oppressive. The wild roses wound fragrantly from the tall hedges, and the light-blue buglos, and the lighter-blue chicory—the latter with flowers as if cut out of silk, and stuck formally on the stalks—studded the sandy banks of the wide heathery lane that they rode along. The wheat-fields stood green, but in full ear, and the convolvulus and the scarlet poppy showed themselves gaily round the borders of the corn-fields.

"I never see those flaunting field-poppies now," said George Woodburn, "without thinking of that young poet Keats:—

'Those scarlet poppies, which do bring to mind
The scarlet coats which trouble human kind.'"

"Ah!" said Letty, "but I think more fondly of Ruth, in the 'Ode to the Nightingale':—

'when sick for home
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.'

That image of the faithful daughter of Moab has given me a new and lasting charm in corn-fields."

"I wish," said George, "some great poet or magician could come and drive a little poetry, or at least common sense, into the old fellow yonder looking over his homestead gate."

"Why," said Letty, "that is that wretched old miser, Timothy Squance."

"Yes, it's Tim Squance, sure enough," said George. "Notice him well, Thorsby."

As they drew near, they saw an old man standing leaning his hands on the gate which led into his farm-yard. He was in a dingy, dirty-looking suit of coarse, grey cloth, with black worsted stockings and strong laced ankle-boots. He had on an old, slouching, weather-beaten hat, and looked with a still, half-imbecile look at the advancing young equestrians. He made no movement of recognition.

"Good day, Mr. Squance," said George Woodburn; "fine weather for the corn."

"Ay, Master George, and for the hay too. I reckon you've gotten yourn in."

"We have," said George, as they continued to ride on. "But Squance has not got his in; and won't for this next ten days, because he won't pay for the necessary men. There are his two great strong sons, and an old carter working at it, that is all. Look at his house, his yard, his hedges, his everything. The thatch on the house is old and rotten; his yard doors are tumbling down—some have fairly fallen to pieces, and he stops the doorway with hurdles. Look at the dirt in his yard. Look at these hedges of his, spreading out on all sides, covering acres of ground. Look at these great bramble-bushes, and furze-bushes, standing here and there in his grass lands. And see what rushes and blue wiry grass are growing all over his fields of pasture. Not a penny will

that man pay to stub and drain his fields,—they are growing wild. He cannot see that labour well employed is more profitable than the sparing of it. His sordid, narrow soul cannot comprehend such an idea. In winter his farm is drowned and starved with water. His house is unapproachable for deep mire. In summer his cornfields are smothered with weeds and thistles and couch-grass. He quotes Sir Roger Rockville in defence of letting things alone—of bad roads and a filthy farm-yard. He won't put his money in a bank or out at interest lest he should lose it; and years ago he had his house broken into by some canal-cutters, and had himself and his wife tied to the bed-posts whilst they ransacked the house, but the thieves found nothing. It is believed that he has buried a great deal of money on his farm, or in the copses; and it is doubted whether his two equally sordid sons even know where it is, or will ever find it. Avarice has reduced his

soul to the most wretched condition of poverty and littleness possible for it to reach and be a soul at all. He formerly had a brother still more keenly penurious than himself. He was so stupid that when any one in the house—for the brothers lived together—offended him, he would threaten to cut his throat and go to America.

"Oh," said Thorsby, who could never let a jest escape him, "no doubt he thought he had to cross the Red Sea to America."

"Those two sons of Squance's," continued George, "never had an atom of education but what they picked up in winter from Howell Crusoe; and he said that endeavouring to teach them was like trying to fetch water out of an empty well. I once went to the house about some sheep of his that had got out of his fields—for the fences were full of wide gaps—and were in a furzy hollow, called the Dales, and were sticking fast by their fleeces to the furze and briars.

You should have seen the place! There sat old Squance, just as you now saw him, filthy in the extreme; his face did not appear to have had any acquaintance with water for years; his grizzly beard was coarsely clipped with scissors, and looked like a rough stubble. The house was half filled with faggots, and he sat on a bench on one side with a bill-hook cutting them into fire-wood. His wife, not much cleaner or decenter, was cooking at the wide black fire-place; and the walls were all round black with smoke, stained with grease, and completely covered with smoked hams and flitches of bacon. The ceiling was partly occupied with the like, and with paper bags of seeds, and bunches of herbs, camomile, horehound, sage, and mint, hanging from it."

"But remember, George," said Letty, with much merriment, "remember what a funeral they made for that silly brother, who used to talk of going such an odd way to America."

"Oh, to be sure," said George. "The coffin was put into the great waggon, and the old man, his wife, and the two sons, sat round it. They had managed to display black for mourning, but it is believed to have been hired at a pawnbroker's, for it has never been seen since. The waggon was drawn by six great farm-horses, with all their bells on their collars ringing and jingling as they went."

"How *can* people," said Letty, wonderingly, "grow so stupid about their money —what good is it to them?"

"None," said Thorsby, "no more than so many oyster-shells; but, Miss Letty, it is of no use your trying to comprehend such people. Their ideas are as unintelligible to you as you are to them. If they were allowed to try a reforming hand on you, they would sell your laces and your clothes, put you into linsey-woolsey, and set you to feed the pigs. Then they would think you

useful; now they think you, certainly, a very useless and expensive sort of creature."

"Oh! I am glad they have not the opportunity for such a metamorphosis," said Letty, laughing.

"It is the oddest thing in the world," said Thorsby, "is that wonderful fancy for scraping up money, and denying yourself all your life-long the commonest necessaries. There is that old fellow, Woolley, of Derbyshire, who made the town-hall clock of Castleborough. That man once tried if he could not save horse hire by employing a lot of stockingers to draw his plough, as he held it, for he had a croft in his own hands; but the plough stuck fast at once in the earth, and the old man left it there, exclaiming, 'How wonderful is the strength of a hoss!' This old fellow is a freeman of Castleborough, and at the last election, coming to give his vote, he could not waste his precious time in waiting in the crowd at the hustings, but crept

amongst their legs and came up by the table where the candidate and his friends stood taking votes. Seeing a very shabby-looking man thus emerge from amongst their feet, the candidate said, 'There, my good fellow, vote and away,' putting half-a-crown into his hand. 'Stop!' said the town-clerk, 'that is a very rich man!' But Woolley put the coin into his pocket, saying, 'Every little helps!' gave his vote, and disappeared.

"That clock which he made for the town-hall is a very remarkable one; it goes a year without winding up. When he put it up, he ordered that no one should meddle with it till he came to wind it up, and he took the key with him. Weeks, months, a year nearly went over, and the clock continued to go. At last one day, the very day year, it struck one short at twelve o'clock, and the town-clerk sent a man off to fetch Woolley, lest it should stop altogether. As the messenger ascended the hill out of the town, he

met Woolley coming down. Having told him his errand: 'Fools!' said the clock-maker, 'I told them I should come at the right time. It will go till one o'clock, and it yet wants half-an-hour.' But Woolley," continued Thorsby, "was a philosopher to this Squance, for on being told that his nephews would spend his money fast enough when he was gone, he replied, 'If they have as much pleasure in spending it as I have had in getting it, I shall be quite satisfied. I sha'n't haunt them.'"

"Oh! that is a sensible fellow, said Letty."

"I am giving you," said George, "a flying sketch of our different neighbours in this direction. See that tall brick house on the right hand there; with this nicely kept carriage-drive, and pair of handsome cast-iron gates and new lodge. That is the farm, or I should rather say now, residence, of Mr. Norton. He has a farm here of his own, of five hundred acres: and it is called Peafield.

Norton only lately married a fine lady from the south somewhere, who has effected all the changes that one sees here. Till her advent, there was no lodge, no carriage-road, and no carriage. Now there is a handsome phaeton and pair of greys. Norton himself—you know him, Thorsby—is a tall, solemn-looking man, who had only the education that Woodburn could give him ; and was brought up as plodding a farmer as any of them hereabout. But this marriage has made a great change, if not in him, at least in all around him. Mrs. Norton, who writes notes on beautiful tinted note-paper with the address of Peafield on the top of each sheet, has had much trouble to school her husband—now Squire Norton, of Peafield—into something gentlemanly. He shoots, and courses, and drives like any gentleman, and really, when you meet him in his carriage with Mrs. Norton, you might suppose him some 'squire of high degree ;' but unfortunately, like St. Peter of old, 'his

speech bewrayeth him,' and Mrs. Norton has continually to check him and say, 'Oh, my dear! not so—that is quite rustic—but so and so.'

"Tom Boddily, who has both eye and ear for the ridiculous, tells an anecdote which excites excessive mirth in the evening circle of the Grey Goose public-house. One evening, he says, when he worked there, Norton came into the yard with a lantern to see the horses properly suppered and bedded, and went into the barn to give out the oats for them. Soon after Tom went into the house, Norton came out of the parlour and says, 'Run, Tom, into the barn; I left the lantern on the disappointment. Fetch it.'

"'The disappointment?' says Tom, 'what might that be?'

"'Oh!' said Norton, turning very red, 'deuce take all these new-fangled words—I mean the balk, man, the balk.'

"Tom comprehended in a moment. Mrs.

Norton had heard her husband speaking of being baulked on some occasion, and had corrected him, wishing him to say disappointed. Hence his jump to the idea that a balk or beam was a disappointment in polite language. 'Well,' said Tom, 'was it that he thought of the lantern, for he found the candle burnt down to the socket, the hot tallow and great pieces of red-hot snuff falling through a burnt hole in the lantern on the straw beneath, and in a little time the whole building would have been in a flame.' Tom, however, was as unlucky as he had been with his captain. Norton thought he was too wide awake to the ridiculous in his schooling by his learned lady, and he has never employed him since."

"But it is time to turn homewards," said George, as they were merrily laughing over the late education of Squire Norton, of Peafield. "Ah! but here is another original."

"Good-day to you, Mr. Woodburn," said a jolly, rosy farmer, with a broad, merry, and

humorous smile on his face, as he stood setting wide his field-gate for a loaded hay-waggon to come out. After a few good-humoured words with Farmer Thatcher—as they rode on, George said,—"Now there is a man who is a man in his place, and who does not want to be out of it. He is a genuine through and through farmer, and nothing more nor less. Honest, and genial as the day is long; he loves a joke as he loves his pot of beer and his harvest dish of broad beans and fat bacon; but his jokes are never at the expense of a neighbour, but rather of himself. He says, when he wants warm weather, he puts his flannel-waistcoat on, and then, he says, it is sure to come to try to plague him: and he goes out without an umbrella when he wants rain, and it is sure to come and try to gi' him the rheumatiz. He won't have a blanket taken off his bed in spring, because, he says, it will immediately turn cold, and he should spoil all

the crops in the country. These are his jokes, for things really seem to happen to us thus oddly; but the country fellows here believe him in earnest, and say he certainly is the weather-wisest man hereabout and far away."

With such light-hearted discourse the three found themselves back at Woodburn Grange for dinner, which was set out, as usual in the warm weather, in the house-place. All feelings of sadness or foreboding had vanished. Letty was as beaming and blithe as usual, and Harry Thorsby was overflowing with fun. As Betty Trapps waited at table, Thorsby could not refrain from trying a fresh word or two with her.

"Why, Betty," he said, "you did not wait to hear what a good end your friend Mrs. Ayre made. I assure you it was very edifying."

Betty said she did not wish to hear Mr. Thorsby jest on sacred subjects.

"I wish now," said Thorsby, "I was half

as learned as you, Betty, in the Bible. Come now, tell me this : What was the reason that Jacob on his death-bed, said 'Bless the lads,' but said nothing about the lasses ?"

Betty was doggedly silent.

"Do you give it up, Betty ?" asked Thorsby ; "do you give it up ?" Betty still maintained a disdainful silence, wiping a plate very briskly with a napkin, and handing it to one of the company.

"It was, then," said Thorsby, "because Jacob left the lads to bless the lasses."

Jacob's logic tickled Letty wonderfully—she laughed aloud, and the graver Ann smiled demurely, and the rest looked much amused.

"I thought it was some graceless ribaldry," said Betty then, scornfully. "Eh ! what a death-bed there'll be somewhere, one day ! I wouldn't be there for all the cotton in Castleborough, for all the wealth in Lunnon, for all the fish in the Trent." And with that, taking up the tray, Betty disappeared,

and left them to their dessert, no doubt with much aggravated ideas of Thorsby's death-bed, which was sure of coming some day. That was her comfort in all Thorsby's scorns and jibes, as she called them, though she would not have liked to confess it to herself. On the contrary, she often made the pious ejaculation—"God give him grace to see his awful state. It makes one's flesh creep to think of it. That young man goes on tempting Providence as if there was not a sky above him, and a listening ear in it, that hears and listens on as if nothing had happened, and yet there is another dot gone down in the great Book of Account. God help him; I am glad he is neither kin nor follower of mine."

This she said to Ann Woodburn, who, in the course of the afternoon, told her she thought her quite rude to Mr. Thorsby, who was very lively, but really meant no harm.

"No," said Betty, "he may mean no harm,

and yet there may be harm. There are clouds as often hang o'er heads as never see 'em. I'm jealous, Miss, I am, and awfully when I see such a squitter-witted thing as that — a will-o'-the-wisp, as can only lead into a bog, hanging about that precious Miss Letty."

"Miss Letty!" said Ann, looking offended.

"Ah! Miss Letty; an angel, too good for any such scapegrace as hasn't sown even his wild oats—only mere skegs, which are but bastard oats. I've eyes, Miss, I have," said Betty, "if other folks haven't, as should have. He is clever, I grant you, is that young man; but mark me, Miss Woodburn, he is all fingers and no wrist. He is all pendulum and no clock-weights. He doesna want cleverness, no more nor a monkey, but he wants sober sense, and grace more nor all. I've heard of his daubing a poor dumb creature's face, as if it had fallen, and getting it a

terrible beating. Ay, and he'd daub an angel's face, and ca' it a devil, if it suited him. He would black the devil's boots for nothing, while poor Christians were walking barefoot over glass bottles."

"Stop, Betty, cease!" said Ann, with much authority. "Now you are becoming malicious. I cannot permit you to speak in such a manner of any friend of our family. I—and I am sure my parents—expect you to behave with respect to all who come here with our approbation. Again I tell you, Mr. Thorsby means no harm. I wish, indeed, that both he and you, Betty, were more guarded in your expressions; but you are older than he is, Betty, and should set him an example of forbearance."

Betty was silent.

Betty was not more sharp-sighted than any member of the Woodburn family. All had long seen the intense admiration of Henry Thorsby for Letty, and that Letty was

growing strongly attached to him. But no one, except Betty, augured anything but the greatest satisfaction in the alliance. No direct overtures had yet been made by Mr. Thorsby ; but his devotion to her was obvious in all his actions, and in his constant rides to Woodburn Grange, rather than to his former favourite places of resort. Though his gaiety, and freedom of speech, and fondness for a little satirical mirth, at the expense of her beloved Methodists, offended Betty Trapps and others of her society, his moral character was without a blemish : and his social position and wealth, as shown by the extent of his business, were all that could be desired.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRIENDS' PARTY.

A FEW days after came an invitation to Woodburn Grange, from Mrs. Heritage, to a party at Fair Manor. It was a thing that created no little consternation.

"Oh!" said Letty, "I cannot really go! I dare not go for the world! To think only of another such a sermon! It would kill me."

"No," said Ann, anxiously, "you, at all events, cannot go, dearest Letty; and I don't feel to like it by any means myself. What are we to do? what shall we say? And how very odd—the Heritages don't profess to give parties; they keep an open house, as it were. It is very strange—what can it mean?"

"It means," said Mr. Woodburn, "I dare say, that Mrs. Heritage feels that she left a gloomy impression the other day behind her, and she is desirous of effacing it by a pleasant party at Fair Manor."

"A pleasant party at Fair Manor! Oh, dear father, how *can* a Quaker party be a pleasant party?" exclaimed Letty, walking quickly about the room. And then, laughing in her usual gaiety, "Only to imagine a party of Friends, who neither sing, nor dance, nor play any music, nor any game but fox-and-goose, or drafts or dominoes, and who make such frightful addresses—being a *pleasant* party! Why, to them a letter from a distance, or a very dull poem indeed, is an excitement. Think of David and Dorothy Qualm, helping to make up a pleasant party! But, really, it is a dilemma! What is to be done?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Mrs. Woodburn. "I would not for the world

offend dear Mrs. Heritage, nor dear Miss Heritage, they are so good, and, spite of that unlucky sermon, Mrs. Heritage is so wise and remarkable a woman. I think, my dear, you and I and George may go, and let Ann and Letty be gone out. They can go somewhere for a few days."

"No, no," said Mr. Woodburn, "I don't like that sort of women's subterfuges, to get out of a disagreeable invitation—they are little better than falsehoods. I will tell you now how it will be. It will be a very pleasant and unique affair out in the grounds—they are very pleasant grounds—and you will see, Mrs. Heritage won't preach a single word. She means to do the kind and restoring thing. We will all go, and be jolly."

"Jolly!" "Oh, dear father!" "Oh, dear husband!" resounded all round Mr. Woodburn from the ladies. "What an idea! Jolly at a Friends' tea-drinking!"

Even sobersided Ann, as her father called her, was excessively merry at her father's notion of a pleasant party.

"Why, dear father," said Ann, "though I admit that the Friends are very estimable people, one cannot call them entertaining. I think they are the dullest of people."

"By no means," said Mr. Woodburn; "not half so dull as your genuine aristocracy. Now, in my younger days, I spent a good deal of time in London. I had introductions to much high aristocratic society, through my neighbour, Lord Manvers, and I must say that duller society I never was in."

"Oh, no! that is impossible," said Letty, all wonder. "Why, the aristocracy have all sorts of amusements. In the country, hunting and racing. In town, theatres, operas, concerts; music and dancing, and the finest singing, at their own parties. Their London season is a perfect round and whirl of plea-

sures, according to all that I ever heard or read."

"But I am not talking," said Mr. Woodburn, "of their pleasures and amusements; I am talking of their society. They give you good dinners and good wine, I grant you, and you have all that you say—music, and dancing, and fine singing. You have great crowds of fine and titled people of whom you learn to know nothing but their fine clothes, and fine jewels, and fine outsides. At their more select and domestic parties—dinner-parties, say—all is very outwardly agreeable, polite, and even, to a casual eye, unassuming, for such great people; but, my dear girls, I tell you that, notwithstanding, aristocratic society is the dullest of all society. Spite of that seeming ease and non-pretence, there is a world of real resting upon their own self-consequence and greatness of station. Try to break a little through that soft and shining surface by a little of that familiarity which is

quite allowable in the middle ranks of life, and you will soon feel that there is an invisible but not impalpable division betwixt you and them. It is what a clear glass window must be to a bird that flies against it, thinking it air. You cannot get beyond a specious, arm's-length acquaintance with these apparently so modest and pleasant people.

"A country yeoman may say of the aristocracy, as Northcote the painter says, as regards his profession: 'An artist may honour them as patrons; but to imagine that he can hold communion with them, on a footing of friendship, is a moral misdemeanour, for which he ought to be soundly whipped.'

"Try to introduce a topic of more than lightest and most gossipping interest, and see the effect. Instead of the warm kindling up of a truly interesting and ennobling conversation, you produce a deep silence. So many are the topics in those ranks, which, from poli-

tical and other causes, would be offensive to some one or other, that all really important topics are tabooed. These gay and speciously pleasant people dare not speak their own minds in society. There may be peculiar and close little cliques in which they do ; but in my time it was well known that there were not above three or four aristocratic houses in London in which there was any real freedom of discussion. You met at many of them men of science, men high in the Church and theology, men and women famous in letters, but they were as dull there as the rest. They smiled, and talked of the weather, or of the play, but their deeper thoughts were carefully locked in their souls. No, I say it—that any one who long frequents aristocratic circles, comes to feel a heavy, dull atmosphere there, and is glad to get into the middle regions to breathe life and intellectual thought once more. There is a science of dining-out discourse—the art

of talking without saying anything—and those who are adroit at billiards may get well through the long after-dinner hours. I have been at many out-of-door fêtes. It was the same. You had coveys of gay people—great lords, bishops, princes even, great lawyers, and great soldiers, and their ladies. Much beauty, much collecting of gay equipages at the gates, and splendid military bands of music—but that was all. It is true what Lord Byron says—

> ' He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
> The loftiest peaks most wrapped in clouds and snow.'

"I don't mean to say that the aristocracy, in their families, and the familiar circles of their kith and kin, are not as agreeable and as full of heart and pleasantness as other people. I am now only speaking of them in their general society, as you were speaking of the general society of the Friends; and, in fact, it may seem a strange fancy to you, but I have always seen a great similarity

in the manners of the aristocracy and those of Friends. There is the same quiet, unexcited manner—a repose that expresses no surprise at anything. The women of the Society, in particular, are vastly, in their manners and deportment, like ladies of rank, though so different in costume. Both one and the other class can live in society on the smallest possible quantum of ideas imaginable. Look at the fair, smooth, unimpassioned faces of the Quaker ladies! On those placid countenances you trace no vestiges of the storms of passion or the cravings of ambition. Perhaps the Quaker ladies possess that tranquillity of tone and temper which their aristocratic sisters wear so admirably. Certainly I know no class of people who approach so closely to the aristocratic caste, as the Friends. But, as to dulness, give me the Quakers rather than the titled great, for they do indulge in topics of the highest importance. On the means of putting down war, slavery, priestcraft, and

political injustice ; and on the means of promoting freedom of conscience and thought, peace, and knowledge, they will at any time grow eloquent."

"Upon my word, dear father," said Letty, "I never knew you were so much of a Quaker before!"

"I am no Quaker, little quiz," said Leonard Woodburn, "but I like them as honest and practical people. Do you know that William Fairfax, of whom I was speaking a little while ago, saved me seventy pounds lately? I was passing along the street in which his shop is, when out he came, bare-headed. 'Leonard Woodburn,' he said, 'hast thou any of Dakeyne's notes?' I replied, that it was very probable, as I had lately received a large payment for corn from Derbyshire. This Dakeyne was a flax-spinner, of Darley Dale, and on his bank-notes he had an engraving of a flax-dressing machine, and the motto, 'Strike, Dakeyne! the devil is in the

flax.' 'I never liked that man,' said Mr. Fairfax. 'If the devil was in his flax, he was not the man for me. But if thou hast any of his notes, get rid of them, for he won't stand a fortnight. He has many paper-kites out, and they are beginning to fall.'

"On returning home, I looked over my money, and found seventy of his one-pound notes. I paid them into Mr. Heritage's bank, who immediately, by his agent, paid them in to Dakeyne, so that we might not be the means of defrauding any other innocent person."

"Ah! now I see," said Letty, archly, "why you praise the Friends so."

"Hussy!" said Mr. Woodburn, "that's the way you treat your father's motives, eh!" And he shook his finger in playful menace at her.

At this moment up rode Harry Thorsby, and soon came rapidly in.

"Well, you won't go to this party at Fair Manor, of course?"

"We are all going," said Mr. Woodburn, with a sort of brusque jollity.

"You are?" And Thorsby looked silently from one to another.

"Not Letty, though?" he added.

"Yes, Letty and all," said Mr. Woodburn.

"Are not you a little cracked?" asked Thorsby, gravely. "After what passed lately—why, I can scarcely credit my senses."

"It's all right," said Mr. Woodburn. "I will pledge my wisdom that all will be most innocent, and, I dare say, rather amusing."

"*Very* amusing, I should think," said Thorsby, laughing. "Nay, then, if you are all going, I am going, and I shall try to make a little fun, if possible; but if I see any sermon coming, I shall seize on you, Letty, and run right off with you. But I can't imagine, for the life of me, how we are to get through the evening."

"Oh, but they can teach you how to save money," said Letty, mischievously; "and what can be pleasanter? That Mr. Fairfax showed my father how to save seventy pounds the other day."

"That would be charming, indeed!" said Thorsby. "That settles the whole question."

"We shall see what they will do," said Mr. Woodburn. So it was concluded to accept the invitation; and Harry Thorsby was entrusted with the note to that effect to leave at the lodge in passing.

The evening of the appointed day saw the Woodburns driving up towards Fair Manor. Other carriages were seen approaching from Castleborough, indicating that it was to be a considerable gathering. It was a lovely evening. The day had been cloudless and hot; the earth was dry and glowing, for there had been no rain for many weeks. The air, as five o'clock approached (the

early country hour fixed for tea), was still warm and genial. "The weather is really made for these good people," said Mr. Woodburn; "we have not the proverbial rains and chills of pic-nics and *fétes champétres*."

"And I think it's made for us, too," said Letty, gaily. "I don't think Providence is partial, dear father."

"Just so," said Mr. Woodburn; "for as you are inclined to be a little wicked, you moralising chit, it fulfils the proof that God makes his sun to shine on the just and the unjust."

"Oh! do you number me with the unjust?"

"Now and then I do, Letty; but, taking you altogether, you are pretty well, I think."

They were now entering the great lodge-gates, which were thrown wide; and the marks of a considerable number of wheels showed that, early as they seemed, they were far from the earliest. A sober-suited man,

like one of the villagers, stood guard to keep the little curious village children outside the grounds, and out of the way of the carriages. A little on, and you saw that it was a gala day at Fair Manor, for the fountain in the middle of the front lawn was playing splendidly. The rich fragrance of the orange-flowers, from the large row of trees along the house-front, floated deliciously through the still, warm atmosphere.

As they descended from the carriage at the broad steps of the front door, what was their surprise to see, standing to receive them, Tom Boddily, arrayed in a plain, dark, out-of-livery suit, who bowed with a quiet, arch smile, but with a *savoir faire*, which showed that he was at home in such an office. Tom informed them that the company were all in the garden, where the tea would be served, and said the ladies were recommended not to take off their bonnets. He led the way through the fine wide and lofty hall running

through the house, and to the foot of the steps at the other door, where, with another very *au fait* bow, he pointed to a large canopy on poles, on the lawn, where a considerable company of guests were standing about.

"Now, there's an instance of the quick eye for business which even the lady Quakers have," said Mr. Woodburn, as he led on his comely wife. "Mrs. Heritage saw in a moment, at our hay-making, the jewel of a serving-man in Tom Boddily."

The next moment Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn, and the young ladies, were received with the warmest welcome by Mr. and Mrs. Heritage, and Miss Heritage, the latter of whom kissed Letty and Ann affectionately. They saw George already there, and Thorsby, looking all radiance with good spirits. They were introduced to the different persons unknown to them, consisting of a "mixed medley," as some people are fond of calling it, of the Quaker world and the outer world.

Amid the ordinary attire of those, in Friends' phrase, "not in the Society," gleamed the subdued hues, French grey and dove-colour, the dresses of a number of young Quaker girls, in their neat little transparent and delicately-drawn book-muslin caps. More matronly lady Friends showed their dark-brown or russet colour gowns, white muslin handkerchiefs over their shoulders, and caps of thicker fabric and plainer style.

Thorsby, who had already found himself at Letty's side, whispered to her, "Deuced pretty are not some of these young Quakeresses? What health, what innocence in their looks—and yet, I can detect a certain arch wide-awakeness under all their apparent simplicity. And what an air some of them have, even in that quaint dress—why, I can see that in that gay unworldly costume, they cultivate—Fashion! Upon my word! yes, it is a fact. See the difference betwixt the dress of the elder ladies and theirs! As for Miss Heri-

tage, she is really bewitching. Why, in her simple dark dress and little jaunty cap there is an indescribable elegance. Look at those clear, sunny, azure eyes, under those dark eyelashes, and amid that raven hair. I don't wonder that King George, in his younger days, ran away with a young Quakeress."

"Don't you think," said Letty, looking at him with a funny smile, "that you will be running off with one some day?"

"Never!" said Thorsby, looking earnestly into Letty's eyes.

But there is a call to tea, and the company are taking their places, and we don't yet know who there are. I see, however, Sir Emanuel Clavering, Mr. Thomas Clavering, the rector of Cotmanhaye, and Mrs. Clavering; Dr. Frank Leroy; a number of ladies and gentlemen from Castleborough, whom my readers would not know if I formally introduced them. There was that William

Fairfax, the eminent grocer, by whom Mr. Woodburn seated himself. There was a tall, large, humorous-looking individual, a Mr. George Barthe, a Friend and dentist, celebrated throughout the neighbouring counties amongst the aristocracy for his skill and his droll sayings, Quaker as he was. Not far off sat a middle-sized, thin, elderly man, of a venerable but peculiar look, a Friend, named Mr. Ephraim Wire, reckoned a very great eccentric. Mr. Heritage, a tall, handsome man, very gentlemanly in his manners, and with a dark-brown suit of strictly Friends' clothes, yet somehow very little differing from those of other gentlemen, was making himself agreeable to all present. Mrs. Heritage looked at once Quakerly and queenly, and was as cordially kindly smiling, and courteously hospitable, as if she never had breathed a word of omen in any sermon, or in any other way. She knew how to distribute her attentions to every one, and to

make every one feel at ease and happy. She saw all seated under that ample canvas canopy, at that ample and luxuriously-spread tea-table, where a number of urns, at equal distances, were made the centres of attraction, by being officiated at by very sweet young girls in Friend-costume. Tom Boddily was actively waiting, and conveying cups of odorous tea or coffee with a dexterous celerity which showed old practice. With him were Sylvanus Crook, in his Quaker drab, and another Quaker serving-man, the very counterpart of Sylvanus, only nearly twice his height and size. He wore a drab suit of the very same cut as Sylvanus's, grey stockings, and shoes with large square buckles. His hat was three-cocked, and the broad brim suspended by silk-cords, exactly as Sylvanus's hat. He had a thin, somewhat meagre, but knowing-looking countenance, and greyish hair. His hat now was laid aside.

"Look at that Bunyan's Christian sort of

man waiting so solemnly," said some one to his neighbour. "That is the coachman of George Barthe, yonder, the dentist; odd master, odd man."

Sir Emanuel Clavering and Mr. Heritage seemed to be spreading a great deal of life and interest around them by the conversation they were carrying on. Mrs. Heritage, Mrs. Woodburn, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Clavering appeared equally at home in some pleasant conversation. Dr. Leroy had again contrived to be seated betwixt Miss Millicent Heritage and a young lady—ay, who is she? Thorsby, betwixt Letty and a gentleman unknown to me, but opposite to Ann Woodburn and this young lady, was just asking the same question. Well, she is not a Friend; and she is a stranger; and a very interesting one. She is tall, handsome both in figure and face. Appears five-and-twenty, and has an expression, so clear, clever, well-bred, and yet with a sentiment in her eyes, both of

love, of mirth, and of something deeper, that is very fascinating. It appears so to George Woodburn, who sits also not far from opposite to her, and has scarcely taken his eyes off her since he first caught sight of her.

Well, this fair stranger is Miss Elizabeth Drury. You would like to know more ? Then, I can tell you—that the Heritages lately met with her at Scarborough—where, by-the-bye, the Degges are yet—that is the reason you don't see them here. Miss Elizabeth Drury is of Yorkshire. Her father is as eminent an agriculturist as Mr. William Fairfax is a grocer. Mr. Trant Drury is a great authority in all agricultural matters, an advanced man in Georgic science, in knowledge of stock, implements, and manures. He is a gentleman by education and capital, but not by land: and Miss Drury is his only child. I say, and I am sure George Woodburn thinks her, a very interesting person. He is delighted

to see how, after a few desultory and fragmentary interchanges of speech with longish pauses between them, his sister Ann and she warm-up and "cotton" to each other. What? Yes; they are got upon love of the country, and of the—Church. Oh, that is enough—the Church and the country, and George Herbert's poetry, and Jeremy Taylor—an odd mixture, but very taking to both Ann Woodburn and Elizabeth Drury. There is a great league struck up at once—a friendship for life. Ann Woodburn does not perceive that Dr. Leroy, at her right hand, is spending all his conversation on Millicent Heritage; and Miss Drury, though her eyes do wander a little over the strange company, is deeply interested in Ann.

"But pray," she asks of Ann, "who is that very agreeable young man to the left across the table, who seems to look one through and through."

"Ah! that is my dear brother George!"

says Ann. "You will like him so when you know him."

Miss Drury blushed. Why should she? It must have been because she saw that George Woodburn had noticed the looks of herself and sister Ann directed towards him.

Down the table that amiable-looking Ephraim Wire is deeply indoctrinating a listening number with Phonetics, Vegetarianism, and the true source of health—all topics totally unknown then except to himself. Further down we hear the voice of William Fairfax, grown earnest and rather loud. He is evidently commenting on the burdens of the poor, and the diseases of the body politic: and is uttering his favourite declaration:

"We have three standing armies."

"Three!" says some one.

"We maintain three standing armies," he continues. "We have a standing army of soldiers to fight the French; and another

standing army of doctors to fight Death; and another standing army of parsons to fight the Devil, of whom he standeth not in awe!"

"Hear! hear!" Much laughter resounded from that quarter.

"I hear our friend Fairfax," said Mr. Thomas Clavering, "on his favourite topic. He is brushing our cloth for us; but the good, dear old reviler, he would give us a whole wardrobe if we wanted one. For my part, I like to hear his good-humoured diatribes, and often look in on him, and am sure to find some of the classes he denounces, bankers, officers, doctors, or clergymen there. There is more originality in that man's mode of viewing things than in all the minds in the county. But mark me, I will take my revenge on him before he goes."

With this the guests rose. The tea-table, at all events, had been a decided success. The groups who had engaged in

conversation at table, many of them, continued to walk and talk together with much enthusiasm. Mr. Heritage told the company that he hoped they would contrive to amuse one another. They would find in different parts of the grounds, bowls, a target, and means of archery for those who liked such exercises, and, he hoped, materials for ample pleasure in one another. The company spread, grouped, wandered by degrees in full talk, and disappeared amongst the winding walks. The grounds were extensive, delightfully varied with shrubbery, clumps of noble trees, lawns opening, here and there, amongst them, flower-beds ; and in one place a considerable expanse of water, on which were swans and different kinds of wild ducks ; and seats were placed around for leisurely viewing them.

Parties of the young men were soon found, engaged with bows and arrows ; others having a game of bowls ; and others,

and amongst them Thorsby and Dr. Leroy, trying their skill in jumping. Tom Boddily had pointed out a soft piece of ground where they could jump distances without hurting their legs and feet.

"Now," said Thorsby, "I hear that you, Boddily, are a first-rate jumper; let us see what you can do."

"Well," said Tom, "it does not become me to jump with you, gentlemen. I can, it is true, cut out most of the young villagers at leaping; but it would be presuming to enter into your sports, gentlemen."

"Nonsense," said Thorsby, "I want to see what you can do. I don't want to show my leaping, and have you laughing in your sleeve at my inferiority."

"Well," said Tom, "if master sees us, you will make my excuses."

"Of course," said both Thorsby and Dr. Leroy.

Tom having stripped off his coat, led the

way. The young men were amazed at the manner in which he seemed to throw himself through the air, as if he had been an elastic ball.

"We shall never do that," said Thorsby, taking a determined run, and turning very red in the face, but falling a few inches short of Tom's mark. Dr. Leroy, very quietly, and without much apparent exertion, outwent Tom considerably; but the next time Tom flew a foot beyond this. Thorsby put forth all his strength, but only to find that both he and Dr. Leroy were hopelessly distanced by this wiry little fellow. They next tried the cat-gallows, or high leaping. The result was the same. "There is no chance with you, Tom," said Thorsby; "you must have kangaroo-leather shoes on."

"No," said Tom; "I'll jump in my bare feet if you like."

"No, thank you, Tom," added Thorsby and Dr. Leroy together. "And hark! what's

that? Why, the girls are singing! Singing, I declare," said Thorsby, "in the very heart of Quakerdom."

They hurried off in the direction of the sound, and came to where the large handsome summer-house stood overlooking the garden-wall. Around it was gathered the greater part of the company, and a chorus of voices swelled up from the summer-house, singing most deliciously, Moore's "Harp of Tara."

"Aha! how's this?" said Thorsby to George Woodburn.

"Oh, it is a conspiracy of the girls. I believe that Yorkshire young lady put them up to it. She, my sisters, and Miss Heritage, have got possession of the summer-house and locked themselves in, and are enjoying the lark amazingly. And don't they sing charmingly."

"It's grand fun," said Thorsby; "look, even the old Friends, who say they don't like

music, how they are listening. Look even at that old Silenus, David Qualm, how he is drinking it in as he sits under the tree there. And Mrs. Heritage,—oh, she is smiling quite forgetfully at this carnal outburst."

"Whist! whist!" said Mr. Heritage, equally forgetting his professed aversion to music.

Thorsby jogged Dr. Leroy's arm, and whispered, "Hear that now!—is not that rich?"

The happy holders of the house sang on—a number of Moore's Melodies and Burns's Songs, even "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," which was then very popular, and received loud encores and bravos from the company below, especially from the Claverings and the guests "not in the Society" from Castleborough. Thorsby and Dr. Leroy were as energetically applausive as the rest of them: and when Miss Drury put her handsome, laughing face out of one of the windows, and

said, "May we capitulate honourably?—that is, to march out with all our arms"—here the other fair culprits showed a number of very persuasive arms through the other windows—"with all our arms," continued Miss Drury, "and with colours flying?" the applause was uproarious; the merry girls descended in high glee from their orchestra, and were received with enthusiastic clappings of hands, and much congratulatory greeting from all assembled, which was every soul on the premises.

Scarcely had this lively clatter of tongues subsided, when another surprise seized on the guests. From out a walk issuing from amongst the trees, appeared Mr. Barthe, the eccentric dentist,—but oh, what a nose! The young ladies fairly shrieked with affright; the gentlemen stood for a moment dumbfounded; on came Mr. Barthe with a nose of huge size, and with a termination like a knob of oak. With a most grave and polite

manner, the Friend bowed right and left with a grace befitting a courtier, and with hat in hand, and then passed round behind the trees. The next moment a loud and general laugh broke from the gentlemen, and was joined in by the ladies; but before it was well over, again Mr. Barthe appeared whence he had first issued, with another nose still more astounding. This time it was a huge very green frog; and with the same pantomime he passed along and away round the trees. The wonder and merriment were in full play, when a third time Mr. Barthe appeared, now with a yellow-red flaming beard and head of hair, and a nose—oh! Bardolph's was nothing to it for fire and carbuncle. This time, the surprise having exhausted itself, the applause was loud and unrestrained, and the next moment the Quaker humourist again appearing in his proper aspect, and with the fiery beard and scalp and the three noses dangling by strings

in his hand, was received with great gaiety by his wondering friends.

"My dear friends," he said, "don't imagine that these are disguises that I amuse myself with, or of my own invention. They were the odd fancy of an uncle of mine, a great woolstapler, well known to many here. As he rode far and wide through the country, buying up wool from the farmers in summer, he used to put on one of these noses, or this blazing beard and hair, as he approached some village; the wonder and even terror that he excited were very amusing to him. Boys ran crying—'Oh, look at that man's nose! What a nose!' People looked in astonishment; but greater was their astonishment when on returning through the same village soon after, the boys, seeing him at a distance, would cry out—'The man with the nose!' and, behold, on his coming up his nose was just like any other person's. I am afraid sometimes he must have occasioned

some boys a beating, or at least a good snubbing, when they cried—'Here comes the man with the nose!' and the lookers out saw only a very shapely and befitting nose. Sometimes the women said—'Poor gentleman, what a misfortune! Hush, children, you may be struck with such a nose if you mock!' One woman greatly amused him: her little daughter was dancing in delight at the approach of the man with the nose, on the ash-heap by the door, but the poor woman seeing only a very respectable gentleman, with no nasal enormity whatever, gave the girl a slap, saying—'Come in, little minx, I'll teach thee to be making thy i—o—oms there on the ash-midden. I'll give thee a lection!'"

Such was the story of this strange man, who in truth very much resembled the portraits of sentimental and unsentimental Laurence Sterne; but William Fairfax said aloud,—"George, thou talks of thy uncle, but

wilt thou take thy affirmation that thou dost not amuse thyself in thy journeys through the country with these phantasmagoria? What says thy man, William Theobald?"

"Ask master himself," said William; "he is of age."

"Well then, George Barthe—what say'st thou?"

"I say nothing," replied Barthe, amid a general laughter.

Thorsby was delighted with the fiery hair and beard, and would put them on, to the great sport of the young people. And then he would insist on some of the young ladies either putting them on, or trying one of the noses. At this instant, however, a singular note, high in a thickly-ivied tree just behind, caught their ears.

"What is that?" asked a dozen voices.

"It is a note of a nightingale," said some one.

"No, that cannot be," said Mr. Thomas

Clavering, "the nightingales have long ceased for this year."

The sound recommenced and went on. "It is a thrush," said Mr. Clavering. "No,—what is it? It is a thrush, and it is not."

A loud, clear, warbling again issued from the ivy aloft in the tree. It was to ordinary ears a thrush, and a very fine one. But Mr. Clavering, most intimate with English birds' notes, said,—"No, it was no thrush; he believed it to be a man, but an extraordinarily clever one, and where was he?"

All eyes were strained upwards towards the part of the tree where its great branches diverged, and whence the warbling came. Nothing could be discerned. Suddenly the air changed. It was a blackbird, with its fine flowing notes. Again, and it was a nightingale.

"Ah! that is the nightingale," said George Woodburn.

"No," insisted Mr. Clavering, "but it is

an amazing imitation. Every note correct. Hark to that—'jug, jug, jug, more sweet than all;' which the printer of Coleridge's Poems so provokingly printed 'more sweet than ale.' It is most wonderful!"

But the wonder did not cease, but increased. From the nightingale's most impassioned song, the music, or whistling, advanced into notes, strange, weird, unearthly, into a very triumph and intoxication of wondrous sounds.

"That is surely like the music of birds in heaven!" exclaimed Miss Heritage.

"What can it be?" continued Mr. Clavering, going round the tree, and peering up on all sides. If I were a lad again, I would be up in a twink, and find it out."

One or two youths were throwing off their coats, to mount the tree, when the droll face of Tom Boddily peeped out from among the ivy, between the great diverging arms of the tree, and said,—"You need not climb,

gentlemen, it is only me, Tom Boddily!" In another moment he was seen descending with the agility of a monkey amongst the ivy, and down he dropped lightly in the midst of the company. All crowded eagerly round him, to learn by what means he made such sounds. Tom pulled out a simple lark-whistle, such as village boys use or used, but without any such magical power. Besides this little tin box, perforated with a single hole, he produced also a small tin pipe, not more than four inches long, and by the aid of these, he showed them how he executed such artistic music.

"How in the world did you learn that, Tom?" asked Mr. Clavering.

"I learnt it when I was sogering, sir."

"You must have found a very extraordinary master," said Sir Emanuel.

"I did, Sir Emanuel; and yet he was but a poor boy."

"A poor boy!"

"Yes, only a poor boy, God bless him," said Tom, and the tears stood in his eyes. "I was acquainted with one of our corporals, and often used to go to his lodgings—there was no barracks then—at Ipswich. I often saw a poor, very pale, but pretty lad sitting in the court-yard in a light hand-carriage. He sat there because his mother was a laundrywoman, and could only take him out when she went with light lots of clean linen to different houses. To amuse himself he used to play on a lark-whistle and a little tin pipe. They were these very ones," said Tom, and wiped his sleeve across his eyes. "I was quite astonished at the music he could draw out of such simple things, and delighted to listen to him, and he was delighted to have me to listen. Poor Freddy! if he had had his health, he would have been a great musician. Oh! he had such an ear! nothing caught it, but he could imitate it. He picked up tunes, as chickens pick up

barley-corns, without thinking. And then he was so fond of reading. He had always some books lying by him in his waggon—and he took such a longing, oh! such a longing, to be out in the fields, to feel the fresh wind on his poor thin cheek, and to see the brooks running in the sunshine amongst the flags and flowers, and to hear the birds. It made my heart to ache. I knew he had not long to live; he was lamed by an accident, and the hurt had taken bad ways. The doctors said his days were numbered.

"What a shame! I thought, that the poor lad should so long for the fields, and the winds, and the look of the sky, and the songs and ways of birds, and had but a little time to enjoy 'em, and nobody to take him out. So I determined to take him, and I used to go and draw him into the meadows, and through the woods, whenever I could. And when my captain was away for some months, I devoted all my time to take poor Freddy

out. Oh! it would have done you good to see what a joy it was to him. How he would lie and listen by the side of a wood, and then imitate all sorts of birds, and he would never be satisfied till he had taught me to do the same. But I was but a poor scholar. It is since he is gone that the power has come to me—by thinking of him, I reckon. I don't know how else.

"Poor Freddy! he used sometimes to cut me to the quick, by taking my hand and saying, 'Do you think, Tom, heaven is more beautiful than this? I don't think it can. And do you think we shall feel such cool, sweet winds, and hear the birds, I wonder?'

"'No doubt,' said I, 'no doubt; they have everything better and finer than we have: but, my dear Fred, you are not gone yet. I hope we shall have many a pleasant time together yet.'

"'I hope we shall,' he would say, and then lie and think, and then perhaps drop asleep:

and if ever I see an angel, I know it will look like that child in his sleep. He did not live out the summer. That's how I learnt to play such bird-tunes." And Tom went quickly away towards the house. There was many a fair face wet with tears—and some manly ones, too.

"That is an extraordinary fellow," said Sir Emanuel. "He is a real genius; and he has a heart in his bosom, too."

There was a call to supper. But why need we follow into that large and well-lighted room, where an exquisite repast was laid out. After that, Sir Emanuel, who had had a fine telescope erected by his own man on the lawn, showed the young people some of the marvels of the heavens; and Mr. Clavering showed others the equal marvels revealed by a microscope of great powers; and Dr. Leroy exhibited, by means of a magic lantern, views of many celebrated cities and Alpine scenes, which he had visited in his

travels. The Quaker party was a decided success. All appeared charmed with their entertainment. Even Mr. Clavering had an opportunity of taking his good-natured revenge on Mr. William Fairfax, for as he was making a sort of harangue, resting his hands on a chair-back, and saying, of some things and people that he was commenting upon, "By their fruits shall ye know them," Mr. Clavering said quietly—"But if it should be winter time, and there be neither fruit nor leaves on the trees, how should we know them?" Mr. Fairfax suddenly saying, "Farewell!" turned round and went off, much to the amusement of a group of young people, and followed by Mr. Clavering's pleasant, good-natured glance of triumph.

At the early hour of ten o'clock all were hurrying away from Fair Manor, in the happiest of moods, and Mrs. Heritage had not uttered a single syllable of a sermon.

CHAPTER X.

THE PIC-NIC ON THE ISLAND.

The next morning, at breakfast, at Woodburn Grange, the Friends' party was the great topic. All were unanimous in their expressions of pleasure. "The Heritages," said Mr. Woodburn, "seemed to have thought of everything capable of making the evening pleasant. And only to think of their bringing out Sir Emanuel Clavering so!" Tom Boddily's music, and his story of the poor musical child, were commented on with great enthusiasm.

"And, my dear Letty," said Mr. Woodburn, "the Quakers, without singing, dancing, or playing music or games, do know how to make an amusing party."

"Music and games!" said Letty, "why, we had both."

"Yes, that improvised vocal concert of yours was a grand *coup*," said Mr. Woodburn.

"And the noses!" said Letty. "Who *could* have suspected that odd Friend of being an actor!"

"And Miss Heritage," said George, "did she take part in your singing?"

"Oh! she denied it," said Letty. "She said she only 'crooned to hersel'' a little, as Burns says; but I caught some sweet tones coming out of that quarter every now and then. She has a charming voice; *that* I discovered; and I believe she knows more about singing than she wants to be known. I can tell you one thing—she is a very sweet poetess. I am promised a delicious little poem of hers some day, that she repeated to me. These Quaker girls, do you know, learn off lots of poetry, and the funniest of all

—*such* poetry!—Moore's, and Byron's, and Burns's—of all things. They have a poet at Birmingham; only think, at Birmingham!"

"A gunsmith, of course," said Mr. Woodburn, satirically, "as they hate war."

"No, a banker. What is his name? Moon—Moon——? something about the moon."

"Obadiah Moonshine, I daresay," said George.

"Now, don't, George, drive the name out of my head," said Letty. "Oh! there it is—Paul Moon James. Millicent repeated to me some verses called 'The Beacon.' I did not think them half so good as her own. But the Friends think much of them."

"They are a very extraordinary people," said George. "I found those two queer drab servants, Sylvanus Crook and William Theobald, exactly alike, only one in little and the other in large. They were sitting, and, of all things, discussing Swedenbor-

gianism. I learnt that this Theobald, besides being a Quaker, is a Swedenborgian preacher, but he takes his Quaker notions with him into the pulpit. Instead of taking his text, Thorsby tells us, he says, 'Here goes for the starting-place.'

"There was a young, rather conceited fellow, not eighteen, I should say, trying to make a little fun out of this old man.

"'Now, William,' he said, 'does Swedenborg tell you what the soul is?'

"'Yes,' said the old man; 'it is the real man. This body is but its covering, just as my coat is the covering of the body.'

"'Do you expect then to rise, William, just as you are—asthma, and all?' The poor man is often afflicted with asthma.

"'No,' said he, 'there will be delightful breathing on the heavenly plains.'

"'But I can't tell how all these things are to be,' said the young, conceited fellow.

"'How shouldst thou?' said the old man,

taking off his cocked hat. 'Put me the sky into my hat, Edward.'

"'Ay, truly,' said the lad, 'that would be a feat.'

"'Then fetch me all the water of the pond there in this tumbler,' offering the pert youth a tumbler on a little hand-tray, in which he had been taking water to some one.

"'Well, it just wouldn't go in,' said the youth, laughing.

"'How should it?' said the old Friend. 'The sky is there, and the water is there, and the love of God to his creatures is everywhere, but they can none of them get into thy little measures, nor into thy little head, because these are too little for them. The things are there, but the capacity to receive them is wanting in them, and in thee, young man.'"

"That was a very fine answer," said Ann. "I like that very much."

"This William Theobald is the coachman

of that odd man, Mr. George Barthe, who went about saying such odd things to the young people," said George; "and he gave us some curious anecdotes of him, for he attends him to many great houses. At a great house in Derbyshire, he says, Mr. Barthe was fastening a lady's teeth with gold wire, and as he snipped continually pieces of the wire off, the lady said, 'Oh! let a cloth be spread on the carpet, or the gold will be lost.'

"'No,' said the dentist, 'it won't be lost, any of it.'

"'But it must be lost,' insisted the lady.

"'No,' added Mr. Barthe, gravely, 'I assure thee none of it will be lost. It will all be found in the bill.'

"The lady smiled, and was silent. At the same place, Mr. Barthe went into the servants' hall, and made the servants very merry with his odd talk. 'Now,' said he, 'why is your master like a penny loaf on the top of your

church-steeple?' They gave it up. 'Because he is high-bred.' The servants were very merry. 'But,' said the dry Quaker, 'I know now you are expecting that I should leave you something. Well, I will leave as much money as shall last you till I come again, if you are careful,' and with that he fillipped a new halfpenny up to the ceiling, where it stuck, to the great astonishment of the servants' hall. And there it is sticking yet, says our Swedenborgian coachman, and is shown to all the people that come to the house."

"How *could* he do it!" said Letty.

"I don't know," said George. "The old man said he did not know himself, but that he saw it done, and has seen it since."

"I had a good deal of talk with that Mr. Ephraim Wire. Some wag said to me, 'That is the Castleborough Nebuchadnezzar; he lives on grass.' I have heard him termed an eccentric of the first rank. He certainly

has some singular ideas, but there is something in them. In the first place, he wants a reform in the mode of spelling our words, which, he says, is barbarous. They ought to be spelled as they are pronounced. In the second, he refuses to eat meat on principle. He thinks it inhuman to kill animals for food. I bade him recollect that God expressly gave to Noah, and to all men after him, all flesh for food, and that our Saviour eat the paschal lamb. Those, he said, were Jewish customs, and might do for Jews; but we were Christians, and called to fulfil the perfect law of love. I reminded him of the preying of all animals on each other, from the greatest to the least, and that therefore it must be a law of nature, which is a law of God. 'We are not mere animals,' he replied, 'but men and Christians.' I reminded him that he could not fully carry out this system, that every day he destroyed insects by treading on them, and myriads of living things

in water by drinking. 'That,' said he, 'I cannot help, but I spare pain as far as I can.'"

"Well," said Ann, "at least it is very humane and praiseworthy. And so they call him Nebuchadnezzar, because he lives on vegetables."

"Just so," added Mr. Woodburn; "but Mr. Wire goes further. He had a great deal to say on the mischievous modes of modern dress, on ladies' stays, and even on garters. 'All tight ligatures,' he says, 'impede the circulation of the blood, and injure the constitution.' He pulled up his loose trowsers, and showed me that he wore short socks, and thus avoided the necessity for garters."

Mr. Woodburn found much wisdom in what the public of Castleborough then set down as whims; but we know that Mr. Wire's philosophy has now become extensively adopted. At that day he stood alone in it, in all its branches.

This conversation was not terminated when Miss Heritage and Miss Drury were seen coming up the front garden in their riding-habits. They were received with great gladness. Miss Heritage had lost the appearance of the Friend, for she wore a black hat with her dark habit; and both she and her friend looked fascinating. They were going an early ride, and wanted the young ladies to join them. They not only accepted the invitation joyfully, but George volunteered his company, and went out to see about the horses.

The whole Woodburn family were charmed with Miss Drury. There was something so bright and frank in her manner and intelligent countenance; her voice had an animating tone in it. She was, moreover, so much at home in all the affairs of a farm; though, unlike Mrs. Woodburn, she did not take any part in the actual economy of the dairy; could neither make a cheese nor mould a pound of butter, her father having had her

educated exclusively as a lady to preside in a house, and not to partake in its professional labours, yet she knew all that belonged to the whole business of farm-life. She talked with Mrs. Woodburn of all matters within and without doors, and could give to Mr. Woodburn a most perfect idea of the style and routine of cultivation in the West Riding of Yorkshire, describe the cereals which flourished most there, the advantages of stall feeding, the particular character and value of stock there. Mr. Woodburn was delighted, and said he should inflict on her a walk through his farm one of these days, and enlighten himself by her opinions. Elizabeth Drury said she should enjoy such a walk greatly. All kinds of country life had attractions for her: even hunting; and she not unfrequently followed Lord Faversham's hounds with her father.

George announced the horses at the door; and the little cavalcade was soon in the

saddle. Sylvanus Crook, who had been the two ladies' groom so far, returned home, and George Woodburn took charge of the whole party. It was a beautiful sight to see those four lovely women and the manly George Woodburn ascending the road from the house, and then, breaking into a canter, disappear beneath the trees at the turn of the road under the sand-cliffs.

"Nothing like youth, my dear," said Mr. Woodburn to his wife, as they turned into the house.

"Except a happy middle-age, my dear Leonard," replied Mrs. Woodburn, "with such good, happy children, and dear friends about us. I don't envy youth, but I love to see them enjoying their golden days."

"You are right, mother," said Mr. Woodburn; "I sometimes almost tremble when I think on the long run of blessings that we have had."

"Nay, my dear Leonard," said Mrs. Wood-

burn, "don't imagine trouble because you are happy; that's a shadow out of Mrs. Heritage's sermon."

"Perhaps it is," said Mr. Woodburn; "let us take a turn down the garden and orchard, and disperse it by seeing how things are coming on."

So the two loving ones wandered slowly from flower-beds to kitchen-beds of vegetables; and saw what peas, what beans wanted gathering; how the raspberries were getting too ripe; how the wall-fruit was prospering; and then surveyed the apple, pear, and plum trees in the ample old orchard, and decided that the crop would be abundant and fine. They sate long on a seat under tall hazels overlooking the country, and conversed of many things, past and present, and of events connected with their neighbours, and the farms that lay around; and as they slowly wandered back towards the house, the shadow was gone, and a calm

and sober joy, like that of the day itself, lay on their minds.

At noon the young people returned, full of enjoyment of their ride, and George escorted the two visitors to Fair Manor gate. All were eloquent in Miss Drury's praise: her fine figure and easy grace on Maydew's back; her light and kindly spirit; her admiration of their country, and familiarity with everything she saw. Ann loved her more and more for her love of her church, and of religion, without its formality. Letty was delighted with a boating excursion that Miss Heritage had proposed to-morrow, and tea on the great island, with only just themselves, Miss Heritage and Miss Drury.

"And," said Ann—"Mr. Harry Thorsby; you did not mean to omit him, Letty?"

Letty was already half way upstairs, to be ready for dinner.

In the afternoon of the next day, Miss

Heritage and Miss Drury walked down to Woodburn Grange, and said their boat was waiting at Wink's Ferry, with Tom Boddily and Sylvanus Crook to assist in rowing. Thorsby was already at the Grange in high spirits, as usual, and soon the youthful party were descending through garden and old orchard to the river. Thorsby and Tom Boddily were to row Ann and Letty Woodburn, and George Woodburn, Millicent Heritage and Elizabeth Drury, aided by Sylvanus. This was done, for one thing, that Thorsby and Sylvanus might not get to sparring on religious points. The day was glorious, the wind was still, the sunshine lay tranquilly over the lovely landscape, and the two boats, with a pleasurable leisureliness, ascended the fair winding stream, amid much talk and sprightly "chaffing," as Thorsby termed it, from one boat to another. The fields, now cleared of their hay-crop, were scattered over with fine herds of cattle, looking peacefulness

itself; the trees on the slopes, on their left hand, as they ascended, seemed to dream in their slumbrous foliage. Our young girls came opposite to Cotmanhaye Manor, and admired its fine situation on its swelling hill, and the old tower a little in advance on the steeper ridge. When out of sight of the house, they moored their boats, and ascended the steep slope, to get a view from the hill. Then, having gazed over the extensive scenes beyond with many expressions of delight, they beckoned to the boats below, to advance up the river, and they themselves took a fine round through woods, and valleys, and past an old water-mill, half-hidden in its alder-trees. Here they made prize of a quantity of white and yellow water-lilies, and conveyed them to the boat. The descending sun warned them to return down the river to their appointed tea at five o'clock, on the great island under Rockville Grove.

Anon, they were landing there, and Miss

Drury was in raptures with that little Fairy-land. On one side, the woods of Rockville hung darkly down the steep slope, on the other ran the crystalline river, and the wide meadows showed greenly beyond. Abundant willows, mixed with midsummer flowers, made a soft, verdurous fence round the island. Its mown surface was like a garden, or park lawn. Already Betty Trapps was busy there. She had kindled a fire near the upper end, where a burnt spot evidenced the fact of former fires on similar occasions. The tea kettle was briskly boiling. Under a large oak, a snow-white cloth was spread, and upon it showed all apparatus for tea and coffee, with abundance of bread and butter, plum cake, spiced cakes, custards, cream, and grapes and peaches.

Betty and Tom Boddily officiated, and Sylvanus, as of a soberer age, and a little tired with his rowing, was invited to join the merry circle which surrounded the rural feast

Lively talk and flights of humour alternated with the emptying and filling of cups. Thorsby proposed a song, and sung Dibdin's "Black-eyed Susan." Miss Drury delighted them with the False Knight, "I love and I ride away." When some other songs had followed, and Tom Boddily had given them a further bird performance on his magic pipes, "Now," said Thorsby, "for a riddle. You don't know it; for I have just made it."

"Splendid!" said they all; "now for it."

"What is that which lies down, and stands up, and sails, and flies, at the same time?"

"It is a genuine, bonâ-fide riddle, is it," asked George Woodburn, "and no hoax, Thorsby?"

"Oh! out and out genuine," said Thorsby.

Nobody could guess it. Thorsby was delighted, and would not tell it. "No, as it was bran new, it must not be let out all at once." Suddenly he said. "Ah! I'll ask

Tom Boddily, he is as sharp as a needle with two points." Tom was at the fire, at some distance, laying on more sticks. Up jumped Thorsby. There was a general titter, and hands held up in merry amazement—he did not hear or see them. The next moment Thorsby was at Tom's side, and propounded the riddle.

"Did you see that heron?" Tom said, pointing down the river.

"No, Tom," said Thorsby. He turned, gazing in vain down the river.

"But never mind the heron," said Thorsby; "the riddle! the riddle!"

"I have it," said Tom, "it is windmill sails."

"Windmill sails!" exclaimed Thorsby. "How in the world could you guess that?"

"I read it," said Tom.

"Read it! No, impossible!" exclaimed Thorsby; "for I only just made it. Read it! where *did* you read it?"

"Mr. George knows it," said Tom.

"Never!" exclaimed Thorsby, running back to the party, whom, to his wonder, he found in a full chorus of laughter, and the ladies clapping their hands in delight.

"What is up?" said Thorsby, wondering still more; "what is the meaning of it?" And throwing himself down, he said, "Boddily says, George, you know my riddle, and that he himself knows it, and has read it."

At this the merriment increased extremely, and George, taking a page of note-paper from Thorsby's back, which he had pinned there, with the words largely written in pencil, "WINDMILL SAILS," held it before Thorsby's face, amidst the jubilance of the ladies.

"Ha-a-a!" said Thorsby, "now I see! That's where Boddily read it. That's why he pretended there was a heron, to make me turn my back towards him. Well, George, I give you credit for great cleverness; I hope

you give me a little for making that riddle."

"Oh, it is excellent—first-rate," said all together.

"And now I have another idea," said Thorsby, suddenly getting up, and fetching the water-lilies from the boat. Putting these down, he took Tom Boddily, and soon returned with an armful of flowers, meadow-sweet, forget-me-nots, like lapis lazuli; and by the aid of the ladies, and some strings of osier-bark, these were woven into garlands, which he said they would hang up in honour of this day. When they were finished, however, here and there interspersed with oak and hazel-leaves, Thorsby immediately proceeded to crown the ladies with them. Truly they looked very beautiful, and Thorsby was complimented on his taste. George, who had quietly gone aside, dexterously took off Letty's garland, and put her on one of willow, in pretence that she was forsaken. Thorsby

as quietly plucked it off, and replaced it by one of forget-me-nots, putting the willow on George's head amid much mirth.

Betty Trapps, however, was indignant at the water-lilies, because, she said, they came out of deep water, which meant trouble; and, as for forget-me-nots, "It's all wrong," she added.

"All wrong!" exclaimed Thorsby. "Why, forget-me-nots are most poetical and significant. Everybody likes forget-me-nots."

"Well, everybody doesn't, for I don't," said Betty.

"Why, you don't like true blue, then, Betty," said Thorsby.

"True fiddlesticks!" said Betty; "don't tell me about true blue.

'Green's forsaken,
Blue's forsworn,
Pink's the colour as should be worn,
Blue and yellow
The lads will follow,
Green and blue
Will never prove true,'

and you've got both in these garlands.'

"Why, that is a new philosophy," said Thorsby.

"New philosophy it may be," said Betty, "but it's old truth; old as my great-grandmother, and older, I'll be bound. It is true as Scripture, for it comes down from our old auncetters, and has proved its-sen true, or it wouldna have lasted till now."

Betty then began gathering the tea-tackle, as she called it, together, and sung to herself—

"How hard is my fate, once I freedah enjied,
Andars happy as happy could be;
I was seized by the forces their fires to feed,
And captain for loss of the sea."

"What is the meaning of that, Betty?" asked Thorsby.

"Meaning? It's a song my mother used to sing," said Betty, going on with her picking up cups and saucers, and giving them to Boddily to stow away in a basket, "to us children to get us to sleep, and I've cried my eyes out many a time, and gone to sleep sob-

bing, and dost think I don't know th' meaning on't? Oh, it's very cutting, is that owd song."

"Well," said Thorsby, "I have heard something like it, which I do understand;" and he sang—

"How hard is my fate, once I freedom enjoyed,
And was happy as happy could be;
I was seized by the foes their fiat to feel,
And was captive, alas! on the sea."

"Oh, get out," said Betty; "that's the way such shallow pates takes the life out of things. Dost think I should iver have cried over such stuff as that? Why, that is as flat as ditch-water; there's nothing cutting in it. Oh! but th' owd song *is* cutting! It goes to the quick; it goes through bone and marrow. It makes cowd water seem to run down my back when I sing it sometimes o'er my house-work."

Thorsby laughed, and Betty cast a most disdainful look at him.

"Here's a man, now," she said, "who goes

walking with a stick and a dog, like a gentleman, and knows no better nor that! But I'll fit thee, young man, I will!"

And here we may antedate our story to say that Betty did not forget to do it. The next morning when the family came downstairs at Woodburn Grange, where Thorsby stayed all night, they were all edified by seeing pinned up conspicuously on the staircase a memorandum of his which Betty had found —"To remember not to forget to send my trousers to be mended, ditto, boots." Thorsby came the last of all into the breakfast-room, looking very hot, but when the next person went upstairs, the memorandum had disappeared.

As our jovial party of islanders were sitting, the ladies in their garlands, suddenly a boat was perceived coming down under the side of the island; presently it moored, and two gentlemen ascended the bank, and approached the ladies.

"Dr. Leroy," said several voices; "and," added George Woodburn, "as I live, Henry Clavering!"

He rushed forward to meet Mr. Clavering, and there was a most affectionate hand-shaking. Letty and Millicent Heritage also ran forward to joyously welcome the son of Sir Emanuel, who had been two years abroad. Ann Woodburn advanced more sedately but cordially, and, with a somewhat flushed countenance, welcomed their young friend, introducing Miss Drury to him.

"Why, when did you arrive, Clavering?" asked George Woodburn.

"Only yesterday," he replied; "but I happened to meet Dr. Leroy in Castleborough, and he was kind enough to come up to-day and tell me of your water-frolic, and here we are."

"A thousand welcomes," said George, looking very happy, and so said the ladies. A great many questions and answers from both

sides passed, and Thorsby, springing up, said, "Well, now I declare, that was prophetic. I thought these garlands were only a sportive freak, but they were in honour of Mr. Clavering's return, and they shall be suspended from the branches of this oak."

"A bright idea," said all the company; and all were up and very busy suspending the garlands from the boughs of the spreading tree. Henry Clavering thanked them for the compliment, and the party set out to return home. The boats were sent up the river with Tom Boddily, Sylvanus, and Betty, having first put on shore the young people, who walked through the woods and lanes in abundance of interesting talk. Supper awaited them, and a joyous welcome for Mr. Clavering from Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn. As the gentlemen took their leave at night, Miss Drury whispered to Ann Woodburn, "I like this Mr. Clavering. He is so thoroughly a gen-

tleman, and, I am sure, so good and sensible."

"True," said Ann, "but, like us all, not without a fault."

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